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LAST WORDS.

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LAST WORDS;

OR

THE TRUTH OF JESUS SEALED IN THE DEATH OF HIS MARTYRS.

WITH WHICH IS CONNECTED,

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH, FROM ITS EARLIEST PERIOD, TO THE CLOSE OF QUEEN MARY'S REIGN, 1558.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LITTLE MARY,' 'ELLEN'S VISIT TO THE SHEPHERD,' &c.

They loved not their lives unto the death.—Rev. xii. 11.

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TO THE DEAR CHILDREN

COMMITTED TO MY CARE,

THIS LITTLE WORK IS DEDICATED.

In thus heading my page, I would observe how pleasant a thing it is, to find a channel somewhat unexpectedly opened to us, through which we may convey happiness to others. I felt this, when a few evenings ago, I read some portions of my manuscript to you, and watched the lively interest, which they seemed to excite; an interest, that I could not find it in my heart to check, though it made the hands, (so busy when I entered the room,) rest rather idly on the table while I remained in it.

You know, how the next morning my pro-

posal to dedicate my little work to you was received; and will be at no loss to understand, why I find it a pleasant thing to head my paper, not with your separate names, but with an especial and affectionate remembrance of every one of you.

And now let me tell you one of the things which I chiefly desire to impress upon your hearts, by means of this book.

It is the immense difference subsisting between God's estimate and man's estimate of the same thing. Hear what the Scripture says of the truly worthy, of those who "have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "Of whom the world was not worthy." Ask the world who is worthy? It will point you to an Alexander, a Cæsar, a Cicero, to the great and to the mighty after the flesh; but weigh such worthiness in that balance which beareth this sentence inscribed on it—"All flesh is grass, and the *glory of*

man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away;" and you will learn how to form a correct estimate. You will learn, that talents however rare—courage however invincible—ambition however noble—if directed to nothing beyond time, —if apart from that faith, through which alone a good report can be obtained in the sight of God—are altogether lighter than vanity: and in your observation of character, in your study of history, whether ancient or modern, let this truth never be forgotten,—that no true estimate of any object of human desire or pursuit can be obtained, except as viewed in connection with eternity.

For God is my witness, how greatly I long after your salvation.

Exeter, 1834.

LAST WORDS.

CHAPTER I.

'LAST WORDS,' said Mary Graham, as she sat thoughtfully resting her arm on her desk, with some old letters open before her, 'Last Words!'

'Of all things the most melancholy,' observed her sister, who had been for some moments watching Mary's thoughtful countenance.

'Dear Emily, is melancholy the only feeling which these words call forth in your mind?'

'It is indeed; the very sound of "Last Words," to my ear at least, is full of nothing but melancholy.'

'Then indeed, Emily, you must allow me to say, that you have never really considered the subject; and I must condemn these stern general opinions of yours, as sad sweeping things.'

Emily smiled. 'And these soft-sensibilities of yours, dear Mary, what shall I call them? sad unreal things,' she added, playfully kissing her sister.

'Call them what you please, only give me the lawful right to prove that they are not unreal. However let us now examine the ground of our difference of opinion on the point in question, and see whether "Last Words," may not justly claim a higher place in your estimation than you seem disposed to give to them.'

'Agreed; and now dear Mary, tell me, what it was that called from you that plaintive utterance of "Last Words!" spoken as though your whole heart were centred in some remembrance connected with them.'

'I was reading a letter from Scotland, in which was the following passage,—"M. R. hopes that you made out from her half-formed "Last Words," that she meant to remind you

of that sweet promise, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Isa. xliii. 2. I remembered the look of peace, and the short gasping breath that accompanied those words, and I felt, her voice is unbroken now; she sings the "new song" around her Father's throne, now; when I hear that voice again, as I hope to do in a better world, how different will it be from what it was, when it uttered those last, few, feeble words, "Last Words." I repeated, do you condemn such reflections as these, dear Emily?'

'No, no, Mary, indeed I do not. I own myself wrong, and readily yield to the correction, that my stern general opinions are a little too unsparing, sad sweeping things, as you just now expressively called them.'

Mary smiled. 'I have always felt (she said) that there is a solemnity, and a sacredness in "Last Words," to which none other can lay claim. Indeed we have Scripture

authority for this. The Spirit himself puts a mark upon them in 2 Sam.. xxiii. 1. "Now these be the last words of David." Of late, my mind has been led to consider the last words of a greater than David, even of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it has been through reading "Flavel's Fountain of Life opened." He has a sermon on each of the seven utterances of Christ on the cross; and I have found it so profitable to meditate upon them, that I have extracted largely from him, and have formed a plan to pursue the subject, by going through Fox, drawing out and connecting as I go, the "Last Words" of those martyrs who have suffered with Christ since the establishment of his church on earth.'

'How very interesting, Mary; I shall delight to join you in the work if you will admit me, after the hasty manner in which I presumed to express my opinion.'

'With all my heart, Emily; but now I must leave you to make some necessary preparations for the expected arrival of our aunt and cousins. I trust they will be with us this evening, and I expect that our dear aunt will

enjoy digging with us into these antiquated deposits of knowledge. Stewart's bright intelligent remarks too—together with little Marion's child-like simplicity, will all tend to give a variety and a spirit to the employment; so that I really promise myself much pleasure from the pursuit of it. Here are my extracts from Flavel, which you can read during my absence.'

Emily found a richness, and an unction in her sister's manuscript, that greatly delighted her. She had never before seen the dying words of our Lord thus prominently brought forward, and her soul felt the power and the love which they were calculated to excite. The first evening after her aunt's arrival, she spent in reading them to her.

Mrs. Graham had a mind fully able to appreciate the deeper tone of spirituality which characterized the theology of two centuries ago. She was well read in the Fathers, and greatly preferred them to the more meagre productions of the present day. Stewart, her only son, was a fine intelligent youth of sixteen. Marion, a sweet interesting little girl

of about seven or eight. All, with equal eagerness desired to assist Mary in her proposed work of the Martyr's Last Words; and not many evenings after their arrival, the female part of the family were amused on entering the drawing-room, to see Stewart seated alone at a table, looking somewhat important, with a ponderous volume of Fox open before him.

'You have been so long in coming to me,' he said, rather impatiently, 'we have lost a full hour and a half since dinner.'

'Not quite lost it either,' replied Emily, 'and I think I must punish you for so hastily condemning us, by giving you a detail of our several employments since we parted.'

'No no, my dear cousin, it is quite enough to have been kept so long already from our interesting work, pray let us begin now.'

'Stewart will amuse us while we take our tea, I daresay,' observed his mother, smiling archly at her son while she cut the crust from a nice brown loaf, 'are you all ready to listen to the dying words of the first martyr?'

'My dear mother, that loaf looks too tempting by half; we will first lessen its

size a little, and then to our work, if you please.'

All in perfect good humour having finished their tea, Mary took a book from her desk, and handing it to Stewart, he was pleased to find that she had marked the pages in Fox, to which he was to refer for the martyr's "Last Words."

'If I mistake not,' he said, 'little Marion will be able to tell us who the first martyr was.'

The dear child looked up surprised, and rather doubtingly.

'Where did I ever hear or read of him?' she asked.

'This morning in your Bible, Marion.'

'Was it then Stephen, that dear good man who was stoned to death, for saying so much about Jesus?'

'Yes, it was;—and I dare say you will be able to find out and read his last words to us.'

'I think I can repeat them to you, Stewart. You talked to me so much about them, that I have thought of them many times to-day. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;" were the last

words he spoke, and then it is added, "he fell asleep." And, mamma, Stewart told me that the reason it is written "he fell asleep," instead of "he died," is, because when persons fall asleep, they do so, expecting to awake again, and that in the same way when God's people are said to fall asleep, it is meant to remind us that they will rise again when Jesus comes.'

'I am glad you remember so well what your brother tells you, my dear child.

'And now,' said Stewart, 'as a reward for her doing so, I am going to plead that Fox may be always put to bed, when nine o'clock comes to send little Marion to bed.'

The child looked perfectly delighted, while the rest of the party felt grateful to Stewart, for the happy way in which he had contrived to draw the heart of his little sister into an occupation, which they had been led to fear might prove irksome to her. Eagerly running for her Bible, she seated herself closely beside her brother, begging he would tell her whose last words she should next read to him.

'I believe you will find no more in your

Bible Marion; but I am going to tell you the last words of many of the disciples of Jesus; and if you like to find out their names in your testament, and see when, and where Jesus called them to follow him, you can do so.'

She then turned to Matthew iv. 18, and read to the 23d verse. Here were mentioned Peter and Andrew, James and John, of each of whom Stewart thought he should find some interesting "Last Words."

'You forget,' observed Mary, 'that St. John was not a martyr.'

Stewart looked thoughtfully, Not in *deed*, but truly so in *spirit*, Mary, and I think we must not omit him. On the ground of his being the only one of the disciples who died a natural death, and also as being "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he has a claim upon us that you will not think it necessary for the sake of the order of your plan to overlook.'

'No indeed, Stewart, I shall most willingly admit him, feeling that if we limit ourselves to all who have not the same merits to plead, St. John's case will stand alone in our pages.'

'But Peter, and Andrew, and James, are all before John,' said Marion, 'will you tell us first how Peter died, and what he said?'

'He was ordered to be nailed to a cross, as Jesus had been, and when he heard this order, he begged to be crucified with his head downwards, because he thought it was too great an honour for him to be crucified in the same position as his Lord had been.'

'What a triumph of grace over nature, was expressed in that action of Peter's,' observed Mrs. Graham. 'The once fiery, boasting Peter, now the humble, self-abased, self-denying disciple of Jesus.'

'And was he crucified with his head downwards?' asked Marion.

'Yes, he was.'

'And did his last words say that he suffered very much?'

'The last words he spoke were not about himself. As he hung on the cross, he saw his wife being led to martyrdom, and calling her by her name, he said, "Remember the Lord Jesus, remember."

'How long after the death of Christ did Peter suffer,' inquired Mrs. Graham.

'Sixty-seven years, mamma, and when the tyrant Nero was emperor of Rome. The apostle James suffered some years before, A.D. 36, and one very remarkable instance connected with him is, that the man who brought him to the tribunal, seeing him condemned, was struck with remorse, and confessed himself a Christian. They were both led forth together: as they went, the man asked James to forgive him, "Peace be to thee, brother," were the apostle's last words; he then kissed him, and they both as Christians were beheaded together.'

'That was almost as sudden a conversion as the one of the thief on the cross,' observed Emily.

'Few such instances, however, are on record,' Mary replied, 'and there is a just observation of some old writer, whose name I forget, that one such instance is recorded in Scripture, to prevent despair, and *only* one to discourage presumption.'

'But Stewart, you have passed over An-

drew,' said little Marion, who was tenacious of the order in which the names stood in her Bible; 'was he nailed to a cross like his brother Peter?'

'Yes he was, but with his head upward, and Marion, he was so glad to go to Jesus, that when he came to the place where the cross was set up, he said, "O cross, most welcome, and long-looked-for; willingly and joyfully I come to thee, being the scholar of him who did hang on thee, because I have always loved and coveted to embrace thee."'

'Did he mean that he was the scholar of Jesus?'

'Yes, he was one of the twelve disciples; and disciple means *taught*.'

'Had Jesus any more disciples than the twelve?'

'Yes, many.'

'How happy they must have been to have been taught by Jesus himself; I suppose they were all good people who loved him very much, Stewart, were they not?'

'Not all, Marion, we read in the latter verses of the sixth chapter of St. John, that

many of his disciples being offended at what he said, "went back, and walked no more with him;" and if I remember rightly, the hymn that you repeated to us on last Sunday, was one of Newton's, on that very passage in St. John vi. 67—68.'

Marion turned to her Bible and read, "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Mary then repeated some verses of her favourite hymn, as though they were the experience of her own heart.

'When any turn from Zion's way,
And prove to Christ untrue.
Methinks I hear my Saviour say,
"Wilt thou forsake me too?"

Ah, Lord! with such a heart as mine,
Unless thou hold me fast;
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last.

What anguish has that question stirr'd,
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord, relying on thy word,
I humbly answer,—No.'

'How could Andrew rejoice so much at such a cruel death?' asked little Marion.

'Because he loved Jesus better than his life,' replied her brother.

'And now, shall we hear about St. John?'

'James, the Lord's brother, whose name you will find mentioned in Mark vi. 3. also in Galatians i, 19. is the only remaining disciple whose martyrdom is particularly recorded; we had therefore better talk first of him. Besides, I fear that John's story would detain us far beyond the hour of Marion's bed-time,—whereas, much is not told us of James; he was a singularly holy man, so much so, that he was known by the name of 'James the Just.' He was bishop of Jerusalem, and was so greatly loved and venerated by the Jewish people, that the Pharisees and Chief Priests thought, if they could induce him to deny Jesus, it would be a sure means of influencing the other Christians to do so too. So, when the feast of the Passover was come, they set James on the battlements of the temple, and after many flattering remarks on his justice and integrity, begged him in the face of the

assembled multitude to 'persuade the people, that they be no longer deceived in Jesus.' On this, James made a frank, and bold confession of his faith, through which many believed, and glorified God, crying out, "Hosannah in the highest." The Chief Priests and Pharisees irritated at this, cast him from the battlements, then stoned him; but he, nothing moved, fell on his knees, and prayed in the Spirit of his Master, "O Lord God, Father, I beseech thee to forgive them, for they know not what they do." History says of this holy man, that he was sanctified from the womb, and that his knees by oft-kneeling lost the sense of feeling, being benumbed and hardened like the knees of a camel.'

'Then he prayed very much I suppose, observed Marion.'

'Very holy men are generally men of much prayer, said her mother; and very holy children too, she added, as she led the dear child away for the purpose of praying with her before she went to bed.'

CHAPTER II.

MARION thought very often of St. John before the next evening arrived, and then she got her snug corner by Stewart's side, to listen attentively to all he had to tell her.

'My aunt met with a sweet observation in Leighton this morning on the character of St. John, Mary said, as she assisted in arranging Stewart's books for him?'

'What was it, Mary?'

'That the apostle seems, in lying on the bosom of Jesus, to have breathed in of his Master's spirit, so full was he of love.'

'Very beautiful, and not less beautiful than true,' observed Emily.

'He must have been a very dear man; but now, mamma, may Stewart begin to tell us the beautiful story he knows about him?'

'Indeed he may, Marion,' and Stewart began: 'It was during the second persecution of the Christians, under Domitian, that John was banished by that Emperor's order to the Isle of Patmos, where that wonderful Revelation was made to him, which is contained in the last book of the New Testament. This was about the year 97. On the accession of Pertinax, John was released, and came to Ephesus, A. D. 100, where he continued until the time of Trajan, governing the churches, and here it was that he wrote his beautiful gospel. He was much employed in visiting different places in the neighbourhood of Ephesus, where he consecrated bishops, ordered the various affairs of the churches, and ordained such ministers as were chosen by the Holy Ghost. On one of these occasions, as he was visiting a certain city, he was so exceedingly struck with the manly beauty, and ardent character of a young man, that with unusual earnestness he commended him to the watchful care of the bishop, who received the charge, and promised to give diligent heed to it. In pursuance of this, the bishop took

the young man to his house, kept him, nourished him, and at length baptized him, and committed to him the care of a portion of the Lord's vineyard. Favourable as his conduct had been while under the bishop's roof, yet when left more to himself, he renewed an acquaintance with many who had formerly been his associates, and who led him by imperceptible degrees to forget his God.'

'O how sorry I am,' exclaimed little Marion, 'and did St. John ever know it?'

'You shall hear, dear child, if you listen without interrupting me.' 'From one step to another, this poor deluded young man went on, till at length he joined himself to a band of robbers who infested the neighbouring mountains, and became their captain. In course of time, John again visited this city, and claimed from the bishop the soul of the young man, which he had committed so solemnly to him. "Alas!" said the bishop, weeping, "He is dead." "How, and by what death?" asked John. "He is dead to God," replied the other; "for he is become an evil man, and frequents the mountains, the

captain of a band of robbers, and murderers, like himself." The holy apostle rent his garments, and manifested the greatest distress. "Give me a horse (he said) and provide me a guard;" which being done, he repaired to the infested mountains, and voluntarily exposed himself to be taken by the robbers. When they had seized him, "Lead me (he said) to your captain." The captain at first came out armed, and advanced fiercely and fearlessly to the old man; but as he drew near, perceiving who it was, struck with remorse and shame, he began to fly. "My son, (said John, following him as well as he was able,) my son, why dost thou fly from thy Father? an armed man, from one naked, a young man from an old man? have pity on me my son, and fear not, for there is yet hope of salvation; I will make answer for thee to Christ; I will die for thee if need be; as Christ has died for us; I will give my life for thee: believe me, Christ hath sent me." At first the young man stood still as overcome with amazement. Then he cast down his weapon, trembled, and weeping bitterly, embraced the aged apostle, and

besought his forgiveness. John brought him back to the congregation, prayed for him with continued prayer, and daily fasting, and left him not, until he had restored him to the church, a true example of unfeigned repentance.'

This beautiful story, exhibiting so striking an instance of fervent zeal and holy love, filled the hearts and eyes of the little party to whom Stewart read it, and caused such an unusual impression among them, that no one seemed willing to lose it, by turning to any further history of "Last Words," at least during that evening. Fox was therefore laid aside, and some of those sweet chapters of St. John's first Epistle, read and commented on instead. "Love divine, all love excelling," was the hymn chosen for the evening's worship, and the happy family separated, each desiring for themselves and for one another, more of that divine mind of Jesus, which in this holy Apostle was so brightly manifested.

CHAPTER III.

'I DO not think I shall like to hear of any one so much as I did of St. John,' said little Marion to Stewart, very gently; 'will you find something more to tell me about him this evening?'

'Only that almost his last words were, "Little children, love one another." When too old and infirm to do more, this was the sermon he preached to all who came around him, and this he preaches now to little Marion and to Stewart too, whenever they read his truly loving and blessed Epistles and Gospel. But now Marion, I will tell you about one who knew John very well, and loved him very dearly; who knew Peter too, and when Peter died, became Bishop of Antioch instead of him. His name is not quite easy to remem-

ber, so while the rest of the party stay so long over their tea, you and I will go to Fox, and see whether Marion shall not be able to tell them by the time they have done, who the martyr is, of whom they are to hear this evening.'

'Ignatius is his name,' said the dear child, when they were all assembled, 'and he was such a very holy man, mamma, that he quite loved to be eaten up of wild beasts, because he should get the sooner to Jesus.'

'Indeed he did so,' said Stewart, 'his intense desire for martyrdom was quite remarkable.'

'It was under Trajan, A. D. 107, that he was sent from Syria to Rome, to be devoured by wild beasts. On his way thither, though under the strict custody of his guards, he strengthened and confirmed the churches through all the cities as he went. In a letter which he wrote during this journey to the church of Tralles, he gives this lively expression of his feelings. "Would to God I were once come to the beasts which are prepared for me: may they exercise all their fierceness upon me. I will encourage them, that they

may assuredly devour me, and not use me as some whom they have feared to touch; but if they will not do it willingly, I will provoke them to it."'

'Oh Stewart, might not God have shut the mouths of the wild beasts, as he did the mouths of the lions among whom Daniel was thrown?'

'Assuredly he might have done so, Marion, if it had pleased him, but Ignatius knew his death was determined on, and he seems to have felt strongly that it would be more for God's glory, that he should suffer thus openly for his cause, than that his life should be spared; but I will give you his own beautiful words to some friends who perhaps thought as you do, that he was too eager for death. "Pardon me, my friends, (he said,) that I so rejoice in my portion. I know what is good for me. Now I begin to be a disciple, nor shall any thing move me of things visible, and invisible. Let fire, and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs; let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the

devil come upon me; be it so, only may I enjoy Jesus Christ. All the ends of the world, and the kingdoms of it will profit me nothing. It is better for me to die for Jesus Christ, than to reign over the ends of the earth. Him I seek who died for us: him I desire who rose again for us: he is my gain laid up for me: suffer me to imitate the passion of my God. If any of you have him within you, let him conceive what I feel, and let him sympathize with me, and know what a conflict I have. The prince of this world wishes to corrupt my purpose toward God. Let none of you present assist him, my worldly affections are crucified, the fire of God's love burns within me, and cannot be extinguished. It lives, it speaks, and says, Come to the Father. I have no delight in the bread that perisheth, nor in the pleasures of this life. I long for the bread of God; the flesh of Jesus Christ, of the seed of David; and I desire to drink his blood,—incorruptible love."'

'O most holy, most devoted man,' said Mary, 'could such a spirit as his be excessive? Tell me my dear aunt, what you think about it.'

'It is a difficult question to decide, Mary. Milner is certainly of opinion that it was so. Martyrdom,' he says, 'was made too much of in the third century; so difficult is it to be kept from all extremes.'

'Such an extreme,' continued Mary, 'is so contrary to my natural character, that I own I cannot understand its existence., except by the power of grace in the heart, and these instances of holy zeal, do tend to sink me lower in my own estimation than I can tell you.'

'They do well then, dear Mary; the sword that lays self low, does a glorious work; and he who willingly holds the knife to the heart of this great spiritual enemy, is not without a martyr's spirit, and shall not be without a martyr's crown. All God's dear children are called to martyrdom, to a being "crucified with Christ." Only let us seek to experience more truly the inward martyrdom of mortified lusts and affections, and we need desire no greater magnanimity of spirit, than may be thus fully, and continually exercised. But has Stewart no more to tell us of Ignatius?'

'A few of his last words remain, mamma; when he was brought within sound of the roaring of the beasts, he was in no degree intimidated, but said, "I am the wheat and grain of Christ. Let me be ground with the teeth of tigers, so that I may be Christ's pure wheat."'

'Well,' observed Mary, 'he affords a most wonderful instance of the power of a divine faith, to overcome the love of natural life; and surely no feeling is more strongly implanted in the human heart than this. "All that a man hath will he give for his life," Job ii. 4. But who follows this prince of martyrs, Stewart, in your history?'

'An almost greater than he, Mary; we are just now passing from one wonder to another, for the venerable Polycarp succeeds his disciple Ignatius.'

'Is his story too long to begin to-night?' asked Mrs. Graham, on observing her little girl's anxious countenance.

'It wants half an hour to nine,' replied Stewart, and kindly drawing Marion close to him, he immediately began to tell her, that

Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna, and that he is supposed to have been ordained to that office by her favourite, St. John.'

'Under what emperor did he suffer?' asked Emily.

'Under Marcus Antoninus, A. D. 167.'

'You called him the venerable Polycarp, Stewart,' said Marion, 'was he very old—quite as old and white-haired as our dear grand-papa Graham is?'

'He was still older; but he will tell you his age himself by and by; you shall hear now how he was first seized upon, and what he did, and said, on that occasion. He was sitting quite quietly and alone in a room, when some friends of his came and told him, that soldiers were in search of him: "The will of the Lord be done," was his only reply; and when these soldiers were come into the house, he went and conversed cheerfully with them; and so struck were they with his venerable appearance, and his grave and unruffled countenance, that they lamented very much their having been employed to apprehend him. He ordered meat and drink to be set before them, and

begged that they would allow him one hour to pray without molestation; which being granted, he arose, and prayed. So full was he of the grace of God, that he could not cease speaking for two hours. Those around him were astonished, and grieved, that so exalted a Christian should be put to death. When he had concluded his prayers, they set him on an ass, and led him to the city. It was on a solemn feast-day, and, Marion, it was very sad to see how this dear, aged man was insulted. Some of the great men of Rome went out to meet him, and made him come up into their chariots, that they might try and persuade him to deny Christ; but finding that he was not to be moved, they used violent and abusive language to him, and so hurried him in his descent from the chariot, that he was much bruised and hurt. He however, said nothing, but went as fast as he was able to the place of execution.'—

Just as Stewart came to this point, a pause was made, by the striking of the time-piece, and his look, as he turned over one and another leaf of his folio volume, seemed to

say, that Polycarp's touching history was not half told. Marion felt, that had it been possible, she should like the time-piece to have stood still a little while that evening, she however expressed nothing, but readily, though rather considerately, began to collect her working materials together, and to prepare for bed.

'Suppose,' said Mary, 'that we all wait until to-morrow evening for the remainder of Polycarp's story?'

A look of assent was enough for Stewart, who closing his book, caught the little girl in his arms, and carried her to the nursery.—

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was no little anxiety felt on the following evening to return to the account of Polycarp's martyrdom; and the effect proved such a nice stimulus to the little party to assemble early, that Stewart congratulated himself on the happy policy of leaving off at an interesting period in his history.

'The aged bishop,' he said, 'was strongly urged to abjure the Christian faith, and to persuade the people to do so likewise. His reply was full of beauty; "Fourscore and six years have I served him, (he said,) yet in all this time he has never, so much as once hurt me, how then may I speak evil of my King and Sovereign Lord, which hath thus preserved me?"'

'He was then six years older than dear grandpapa,' observed Marion.

'Just so,' replied her brother. 'The Proconsul, however, still urged him, "Swear, and persuade the people, and I will release you. I have wild beasts; I will expose you to them unless you repent." "Call them," replied the martyr. "I will tame your spirit by fire," said the other, "since you despise the wild beasts." "You threaten me with fire," answered Polycarp, "'which shall burn for the space of an hour, and shall be within a little while put out, and extinguished; but you know not the fire of the judgment to come, and of everlasting punishment, which is reserved for the wicked and ungodly; but why make you all these delays? Give me whatsoever death ye list."

'Saying this, and much more, he was filled with joy and confidence; grace shone in his countenance, and the Proconsul was evidently embarrassed.'

'I wonder,' said little Marion, 'that he was not afraid to kill him.'

'It rather urged him to hasten his execution,' replied Stewart, 'for he feared the

effect which such holy boldness might have on the people's minds, more than he feared God.'

'Now when all things were prepared for burning him, and they were going to fasten *him* to the stake, he said, "Let me remain as I am; for he who giveth me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me also without your securing me with nails, to remain unmoved in the fire." Upon which they bound, but did not nail him; and he, putting his hands behind him, and looking upwards with meek submission, prayed at great length, and praised God, in that he had counted him worthy of that day, and hour, in which he received his portion in the number of martyrs, in the cup of Christ. Having finished prayer, and very loudly pronounced his "Amen," the officers lighted the fire; and here, on the authority of Fox, Milner, and others, some very remarkable circumstances are said to have taken place. They relate, that on lighting the fire, the flame burst out most vehemently, and forming an arch, somewhat like the sail of a vessel filled with wind; it was as a wall around the body of the martyr, which was in

the midst, not as burning his flesh, but refining his soul as gold and silver in a furnace.'

'How very wonderful,' observed Mrs. Graham; 'if true, we may regard it as a miraculous display of Divine power, intended to mark the triumph of grace in the aged saint.'

'And Fox further adds,' said Stewart, 'that a fragrance issued from the fire, as though myrrh, or some precious balm had given a scent.'

'But did he not burn at all?' asked Marion.

'No, the Emperor observing the fire did not touch him, ordered an officer whose business it was in the Roman games to dispatch any beast that was unruly or dangerous, to approach and to plunge his sword into the Saint's body, upon which, a quantity of blood gushed out, so that the fire was extinguished and all the multitude marvelled.'

'Then I suppose they were not permitted to kill him,' observed Marion again.

'Yes, they were, for he died from so great an effusion of blood; but the enemies of Jesus, struck at the manifest glory of Polycarp's martyrdom, and knowing that he was now

crowned with immortality, and the prize of unquestionable victory, studied to prevent the Christians from obtaining his body, "lest," said they, "leaving the crucified one, they begin to worship him."'

'A most natural supposition,' observed Mrs. Graham; 'the circumstances were quite calculated to impress the people with a superstitious reverence.'

'And did they not do so, my dear aunt?' asked Mary. 'The blood of the martyrs is said to be the '*seed of the church*,' but may it not with almost equal justice, be called '*the seed of popery*.' From whence is to be traced the awful delusion of worshipping saints, but from the almost idolatrous veneration, which, even in these early ages, was paid to the memory of the martyrs?'

'Quite true, Mary, and how strong a testimony does it afford to the mysterious power of evil. Satan is never better pleased than when he can hurry men into extremes; because he knows, that once drawn out of the circle of truth, it is by imperceptible degrees that they become ingulphed in the depths of error. It

is a valuable observation, and I believe one of Flavel's, that "it is better not to touch the bottom, than not keep within the circle;" a motto, which in these days of novelty and error, men would do well to carry within them.'

CHAPTER V.

On the following morning our little party walked to visit the tin mines at Bottle Hill; and in going over the works, were struck, and interested by a fact, that most happily illustrated the circumstance of a sweet savour having issued from the fire at the burning of Polycarp. On going into the place assigned for refining the metal, Mrs. Graham asked the man, how he ascertained when it was sufficiently purged from its dross?

'Partly, madam,' he said, 'by the ease with which it works; but the surest test is this; when the ore first begins to burn, the smell that issues from it is most impure and disagreeable; whereas when perfectly refined, it puts forth a most delicious fragrance, like some sweet perfume.'

Stewart was delighted with the beautiful illustration thus afforded, and as he walked home, tried to make Marion understand the allusion, by telling her, that the effect of fire on the purest metal, on gold for instance, is, not to destroy, but to refine its particles, by purging away all the dross. That thus, the fire blazing around the body of the martyr without burning him, seemed to have the effect only of trying his faith, and love, and confidence in God; and that the sweet odour which proceeded from him, served to testify, as in the case of the metal, that he was perfectly refined, and meet for his Lord.

'Mamma, I have had a long conversation with Mrs. Wilmot this evening,' said Stewart, when he joined the party at tea; 'and I want to know how far your opinion coincides with her's on some points.'

Mrs. Graham smiled and looked inquiringly.

'That lady,' continued Stewart, 'asked me to tell her exactly what studies I pursued; and when I had gone through a long list of classic authors, &c. she stopped me, saying in her quaint

way, while she pressed her hand upon my head —'Enough, enough, better be at your Bible, my son, that is the best philosophy;" and turning to the Epistles in a large Bible that lay open, she directed my attention to the 2nd chap. of 1st Corinthians, saying, "Learn that and the following chapter; read through the book of Ecclesiastes also, and be persuaded to put aside the acquirement of that vain knowledge, which "puffeth up," and which seems too much to engross you."'

'Mrs. Wilmot is a dear Christian woman, Stewart,' said his mother, 'and I love and value her exceedingly. Circumstances, however, have tended to give a wrong bias to her mind, and sadly to contract her ideas. Her only son, has a cold, and speculative temper of mind. A head-knowledge of religion, without life in the heart, gives to his conversation, a character most painful to his simple-hearted mother. Crude notions of doctrine, ill-supply in her estimation, the place of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness," &c. Now, this disappointment has so sensibly affected her better judgment, that through

it, she is become prejudiced against all literary attainments, which she at once condemns as hostile to spirituality; not considering, that the various powers and faculties of the mind, are the gift of God, and may be used to his glory. Indeed, the very man, who, under the Spirit's teaching, wrote those chapters which she has pointed out to you, was himself brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and possessed classical knowledge to a very great extent, which made him a more effectual instrument, to carry on that great work of an Apostle, to which the Lord had called him.'

Little Marion, who began to grow weary of a discussion which she did not at all understand, whispered a wish in Stewart's ear, that he would tell her what martyr's last words followed those of Polycarp.

'Justyn Martyr comes next in the list.'

'And scarcely could a more appropriate person have been brought before our notice after the conversation that has just passed,' observed Mrs. Graham, 'for Justyn was a Christian philosopher, and since the Apostle's days, was the first Christian who added to an

unquestionable zeal and love for the gospel, the character of a man of learning and philosophy. His search into philosophy was chiefly to find out God, and in God, true happiness. He tried, and found all wanting. He sought him however in the gospel—he found him there—he confessed him—he gave up all for him—he was satisfied with his choice, and died in the cause.'

'Six other persons were martyred with Justyn, I see,' said Stewart, 'and some of them women.'

'What,' inquired Marion, looking full of wonder, 'were women ever put to so much pain, and could they bear it?'

'You shall hear by and by, Marion; but first let me tell you of Justyn. When with his companions, he was apprehended, and brought before Rusticus, the Roman Prefect; he was commanded to comply with the edict of the emperor Antoninus, and to obey the heathen deities. He defended his religion nobly, till the enraged magistrate cried out, "Wretch! art thou too captivated by that religion?" "I am," says Justyn, "I follow the

Christians, and their doctrine is the true one." "If I scourge thee from head to foot, thinkest thou that thou shalt go to heaven, and receive a reward?" "I not only *think*, but *know* with a certainty, which excludes all doubt, that there is a portion laid up for me, and for all these my fellow-sufferers in heaven." Rusticus insisted that they should all go together, and sacrifice to the gods, "unless you comply, you shall be tormented without mercy." "We desire nothing more than to endure tortures for our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be saved. Dispatch your purpose quickly, we are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols." The Governor then pronounced sentence. "Let them be first scourged, and then beheaded according to the laws!" The martyrs rejoiced and blessed God, and being led back to prison, suffered together. Thus slept in Jesus, the Christian philosopher, Justyn, about the year 163, under Marcus Antoninus.'

'Why were they to be scourged, and beheaded too,' asked Marion, 'was not one cruelty enough?'

'The design probably was to induce them

by torture to deny Jesus, but, alas! these tyrants gloried in their cruelty.'

'And could women really bear so much torture?' asked Marion.

'Christ in them could,' replied her mother. 'It is not in the power either of men or women to endure such sufferings, and to rejoice in them also, unless through strength given them from above. My dear child, the fortitude and magnanimity these martyrs exhibited was all of God, and it matters not with Him through what instrument He works; indeed it is His way often, to choose the weak things of this world, that the power may be more manifestly seen to be of Him, and Him alone; and thus you may expect to hear of even greater fortitude in women, than in the other sex, whom we generally regard as the stronger.'

'The story of Perpetua, which we have next to relate, quite justifies your remark, dear mamma,' said Stewart, 'her singular constancy being most wonderful. She was a lady of quality. Milner observes, "that considering the delicate tenderness with which she had

been brought up, and the feminine softness of her character, she affords a striking instance of the victorious strength of divine love, over all natural affection." She was only twenty-two at the time she was called upon to suffer; was married, and had a young infant—added to her other trials, she had to withstand the importunities of a fond father, who was a pagan, and regarded her pious adherence to the faith as an absurd obstinacy. In company with several others, she was thrown into a dark prison—to persons accustomed to hardships, such a change of scene would present an aspect not so very terrible, but to Perpetua, who had experienced only the refinements of genteel life, it was peculiarly distressing and formidable. Her concern for her infant was, as you may well suppose, extreme. Her father came to her in the prison overwhelmed with grief. "Have pity, my daughter," says he, "on my grey hairs: have pity on your father. If I was ever worthy of that name, if I have brought you up to this age, if I have preferred you to all your brethren, oh! make me not a reproach to mankind now—have

compassion on your infant son, who cannot survive you—lay aside your obstinacy, lest you destroy us all: for if you persist, we must shut our mouths in disgrace." Then this aged parent kissed her hands, threw himself at her feet, weeping, and addressed her, no longer as his daughter, but as the mistress of his fate, on whom all his own happiness depended. He was the only person of her family who did not rejoice at her martyrdom. Perpetua inwardly struggling under a sense of the warmest filial affection, could offer him no other comfort, than to desire him to submit to the Divine disposal. The next day she was brought with her companions into the Court. There the unhappy father appeared with his little grandson, and taking Perpetua aside, intreated her to have some pity on her child, but in vain. Then he attempted to snatch his daughter from the scaffold, for which he received a severe blow, which Perpetua felt very acutely. Donata, Felicitas, and Secunda, with Perpetua, were condemned to be thrown to wild beasts. The spirit of God was much with them on the day of trial; joy, rather than

fear, was expressed in their looks. Perpetua, supported in her soul by Jesus Christ, advanced with a composed countenance, and an easy pace, holding down her eyes, lest she might be exposed to insult from the inhuman spectators. She sang as one who had already obtained the victory, and rejoiced with her fellow-martyrs, in being conformed to her Saviour in his death. After having been cruelly mangled by the beasts, the enraged multitude insisted on their being scourged; this was done, and finally they were beheaded. The blessed Perpetua fell into the hands of an unskilful executioner, who put her to much unnecessary pain. She cried out, and then with her own hand, guided the murderous blade to her throat. Thus, with her fellow-martyrs, she slept in Jesus, a woman highly favoured indeed, and blessed of God. Her death took place, A. D. 205, under Severus, whose reign was marked by a long and painful persecution of the Christians.'

'And are many of their last words recorded?' asked Marion.

'No, there are remarkably few, considering

how numerous the martyrdoms were; one or two instances only I believe, beside that of Perpetua. The principal of them is, Pionius, a presbyter of the church of Smyrna; indeed his whole character is very deeply interesting. The circumstances in which he stood, were calculated to try his faith to the utmost. The Bishop of Smyrna had apostatized during the persecution of Decius, and many followed his example. Pionius stood strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, a proof that the glory of that church was not totally lost.'

'I wonder,' interrupted Emily, 'whether our little Marion can tell us where, in her Bible, Jesus speaks of the Church of Smyrna?'

'Is it not in the Revelations, Emily?'

'Yes, dear child, in the 2d chapter, and at the 8th verse, and I should like very much to hear you read the passage.'

Marion readily found it and read:—"And unto the angel of the Church of Smyrna write; these things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but

thou art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the Devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

'What a promise for Pionius; pray Stewart let us hear more about him.'

'When seized and led by the magistrates to the market, he addressed the citizens of Smyrna at some length, and was heard attentively. The people who summoned him said, "believe us Pionius, your probity, and wisdom, make us deem you worthy to live; and life is pleasant." "I own," says the martyr, "life is pleasant, but I mean that eternal life which I aspire after." He was sentenced to be burnt alive. Pionius went cheerfully to the place of execution, and thanked God, who had preserved him from the guilt of idolatry. After he was stretched and nailed to the wood, the executioner said to him, "Change your mind and the nails shall be taken out." "I have felt

them," answered Pionius;—he then remained thoughtful for a time;—after, he said, "I hasten, O Lord, that I may the sooner be partaker of the resurrection." With his eyes shut, he then remained motionless, absorbed in prayer, while the fire was consuming him. At length he opened his eyes, and looking cheerfully in the fire, said, "Amen." His last words were—"Lord Jesus, receive my soul."

"These are not torments which we suffer for the name of our Lord Jesus, they are wholesome unctions," were the last remarkable words of Maximius, a fellow-sufferer with Pionius. Such was the effect of the Holy Ghost, shedding the love of God in Christ abroad in the human heart!

'Most sweet and encouraging accounts indeed,' observed Mrs. Graham. 'You have given us a rich treat to-night, Stewart.'

'And rather a long one too, mamma, for I see by my watch that the time-piece has stopped, and that it is a quarter past nine.'

CHAPTER VI.

'MARY,' said Stewart, when they again met, 'in looking over your notes of reference to the pages that are to occupy us this evening, I see you have extended your account of Cyprian much beyond his last words.'

'I know I have, Stewart; but really there is such a depth and richness in many of his short sayings, that I could not but transfer a few of them to my note book.'

'And will you be so kind, Stewart, as to transfer them to us?'

'By all means, mamma; I think it will be a delightful deviation from our usual plan; for Cyprian's "Last words" are very few, and give but a very inadequate idea of those qualities, which have raised him so high among

the Fathers of the church. Pontius, his deacon, who wrote the details of his life, says of him—"His conversion was so entire, he seems to have been led on with vast rapidity by the effectual operation of the Divine Spirit. Faith and love in all their native simplicity graced his character as an early convert." Writing of his own conversion he says, "Of God it is, of God I say, even all that we can do. Thence we live, thence we have strength; only let fear be the guardian of our Divine life; that the Lord, who kindly shone into our minds with an effusion of heavenly grace, may be detained as our guest by the steady obedience of the soul that delights in Him; lest pardon received should beget a careless presumption, and the old enemy break in afresh." And now Mary I think I must resign the book to you; you understand the arrangement of your own notes better than I do; and as we can allow only a very limited selection from Cyprian's writings, will you make it, and yourself read those extracts which you think the most striking? but when you come to the history of his martyrdom, I will resume my task.'

Mary did so, and the following beautiful passage on the freeness and fulness of the gift of the Spirit was the first she read.

'According to the proportion of faith, so will your attainments and enjoyments be. No bound or measure can be assigned to the measure of divine grace, as is the case of earthly benefits. The Holy Spirit is poured forth copiously, is confined by no limits, is restrained by no barriers. He flows perpetually. He bestows in rich abundance. Let our hearts only thirst, and be open to receive Him. As much of capacious faith as we bring, so much abounding grace do we draw from him.'

'How encouraging, and how blessed the experience of the man, whose eyes have seen, and whose heart has tasted of the largeness, and willingness of the Spirit, in a measure such as Cyprian here describes,' said Mrs. Graham; and she added a prayer that 'thus it might be with herself and those around her.'

'Cyprian,' said Mary, 'drank deeply of those "words of a man's mouth which are

deep waters." Prov. xviii. 4. His soul seems to have traversed wide the length and breadth, and to have risen high into the heighth, and to have trodden deep into the depth of his Saviour's immeasurable love. Speaking of the Christian's privilege he says, "He who is greater *than* the world, can desire nothing, can want nothing *from* the world;" and again, "There can be no penury with him, whose heart is once enriched with celestial bounty. The gift of God is gratuitous and easy. As the sun shines freely, as the rain bedews, as the fountain bubbles, so the heavenly Spirit infuses himself." And when writing on the subject of mispent hours, he cautions,—"Let us be careful how we spend our time. Let us rejoice, but let not one hour of entertainment be inconsistent, or unconnected with divine grace." But I suppose I must have done; were I to select as largely as I might, it would be to encroach far beyond our limits, for of Cyprian's writings, as well as of his conversation, the observation of his biographer is just—that "during the thirteen years of his Christian life, his whole conversation was in

heaven." Stewart, however, will now give us some account of its close.'

'"Cyprian's retirement from the persecution of Decius, shows him to be of a very different spirit from Ignatius, in regard of seeking martyrdom. Instead of that ardent desire for it which Ignatius discovered, he knew and embraced the liberty which his Divine master had given to his people, of fleeing, when persecuted, from one city into another; he seems scarcely to have thought it lawful to do otherwise; but when the Lord plainly told him that his hour was come, we find him quite prepared to die. In one of his last letters to his clergy and people, when waiting at Carthage for the return of the Proconsul, who was to judge him, he writes: "Here I wait the return of the Proconsul, ready to appear before him, and to say what shall be given me in that hour. The Lord who dwells in us will speak. *Confession*, rather than *profession*, is our duty." The arrival of the Proconsul was announced, and this venerable servant of Christ was brought before him into the judgment-hall. "Are you Thascius Cyprian?" "I am."

"Are you he whom the Christians call their bishop?" "I am." "Our princes have ordered you to worship the gods." "That will I not do." "You would judge better to consult your safety." "My safety and my strength is Christ the Lord, whom I desire to serve for ever. I have no desire that things should be otherwise with me, than that I may adore my God, and hasten to him with all the ardour of my soul; for "the afflictions of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." The Proconsul grew red with anger, and immediately pronounced sentence of death. "God be praised," said the martyr. A troop of soldiers attended him, and the officers marched on each side. Cyprian took off his mantle, fell on his knees, and worshipped his God. He himself bound the bandage over his eyes, and a presbyter and deacon tied his hands. The Christians placed handkerchiefs and napkins to receive his blood. His head was then severed from his body. Pontius represents himself as divided between joy and sorrow—joy, at the bishop's victorious martyr-

dom; and sorrow, that he himself was left behind. Thus slept in Jesus the truly magnanimous and benevolent spirit of Cyprian of Carthage, A. D. 259, under the emperor Valerian; during whose persecution, Sixtus, Bishop of Rome, was also beheaded.'

'Sixtus,' exclaimed little Marion, 'Mamma, was not Sixtus the name of the Bishop who had a Deacon called St. Lawrence? I mean the St. Lawrence who was broiled to death on a gridiron, and whose image we saw in the church of St. Mary Major, at Exeter?'

'The very same, Marion, and I remember we thought it strange, that the image of this saint should not rather have stood in the church of the same name, for there is a church of *St. Lawrence*, at Exeter.'

'And have you really got the account of St. Lawrence's death to read to us Stewart?'

'Yes, I have it here, and will give it to you in Fox's own words. "Now then," he says, "let us enter on the story of that most courageous and constant martyr of Christ, St. Lawrence, whose words and works deserve to be as fresh and green in Christian hearts, as

is the flourishing laurel tree. This thirsty heart, longing after the water of life, desirous to pass unto it through the strait door of bitter death; as he saw Sixtus, his vigilant shepherd, led as a harmless lamb to his death, cried out with invincible courage, saying, "O dear father, whither goest thou without the company of thy dear son? Whither hastest thou, O revered priest, without thy deacon? Never wast thou wont to offer sacrifice without thy minister. What is there in me that offendeth thy fatherhood? Hast thou proved unnatural? Now try, sweet father, whether thou hast chosen a faithful minister or not? Deniest thou unto him the fellowship of *thy* blood, to whom thou hast committed the distribution of the Lord's blood? The abasement of the scholar is the disgrace of the master. Father declare thy manifold virtues by me thy son. Offer thou him that proferreth himself; grant that the body of thy scholar may be sacrificed, whose mind thou hast beautified." Sixtus answered him, "I forsake thee not, O my son; a sharper conflict remaineth for thee; cease to weep and lament; in three days

thou shalt follow me." He seemed to speak prophetically, for after Sixtus' death, the Prefect of Rome, moved by an idle report of the immense riches of the Roman church, sent for Laurentius, supposing them to be in his custody, and ordered him to deliver them up. Laurentius replied, "Give me a little time to set them in order, and to get an account of each particular." He was granted three days; in which time, he caused a number of poor Christians to be assembled, and being called upon by the Prefect, presented them, saying, "These are the precious treasures of the church, these, in whom the faith of Christ reigneth, in whom Jesus hath his dwelling-place; what more precious jewels can I have, than those in whom he has promised to dwell?" "Do ye mock me?" cried the infuriated Prefect. "I know that ye value yourselves for contemning death, therefore ye shall not die *at once*." He caused Laurentius to be stripped, extended and fastened to a gridiron, and in that manner to be broiled to death by a slow fire. After continuing long, he said to the Prefect, "let me be turned." And when they had

turned him, he looked up to heaven, prayed for the conversion of Rome, and then slept in Jesus. The God of might and mercy, grant us grace by the life of St. Lawrence, to learn in Christ to live; and by his death, to learn for Christ to die. Amen.'

'Such is Fox's account, and a very interesting one it is.'

'Exceedingly so,' said Mrs. Graham, 'and the constancy of the martyr under such intense and protracted suffering, is quite wonderful.'

'We have heard of nothing half so cruel before, mamma,' observed Marion. 'To be broiled on a gridiron; it must have been such a very painful death, I tremble only to think of it.'

'I see you do,' replied Stewart; 'but Marion, it is not impossible, that a little child like yourself, should be enabled to bear the same measure of suffering that St. Lawrence endured. The power of God is the same, through whatever channel it be exhibited; and a man is equally weak as a little child, except as he is made strong through the power of God; be not surprised then, if to-morrow

evening, should we be permitted to meet, I give you the history of the martyrdom of two children not much older than yourself.'

Marion did look and feel most exceedingly surprised, she could not have conceived such a thing possible, and with no little anxiety watched the return of the hour, at which her mamma and cousins would assemble. As a proof of this anxiety, they all met early, and Stewart immediately began his story.

CHAPTER VII.

'AGNES was a Roman virgin of a noble family. She was at the period of her martyrdom no more than thirteen or fourteen years old, and when she was brought to her trial she said, "Christ, even Christ, is he whom I confess that I love. I will make haste to meet him. Willingly will I receive the length, and draw the force of the sword into my bosom; that thus being married unto Christ, I may escape all the darkness of this world, and fly to him. O eternal Father, open to me the gates of heaven; and receive, O Christ, my soul that seeketh thee." Thus praying, Agnes laid down her head with the utmost gentleness. The executioner hacked and hewed her body most unmercifully, yet she bore it with incredible constancy, singing hymns all the time.'

'Blessed saint,' observed Mrs. Graham; 'such instances practically illustrate that faith and gentleness, which in their effects, seem opposed to each other when viewed separately; but are indeed fruits of the same Spirit. The masculine strength of the one, and the feminine tenderness of the other; how beautifully do they harmonize, the one adding grace to the other.'

Little Marion looked astonished; she knew there were two children whose martyrdoms Steward was to relate, and she waited in perfect silence until he began the story of 'Cyril, a boy between nine and ten years old, who lived at Cesarea, in Cappadocia. Jesus was very dear to him, he continually called upon his name. Neither could blows nor threats prevent him from openly avowing Christianity. Several children of his own age persecuted him cruelly, and his own father, in his zeal for Paganism, drove him from his house. The judge on hearing this, ordered the boy to be brought before him. Evidently moved at sight of his extreme youth, "My child," he said, "I will pardon your faults,

and your father shall receive you again, if you will confess them, and be sorry." "God will receive me," replied the child; "I am not sorry that I am expelled my father's house, I shall have a better mansion; I fear not death, because it will let me into a better life with Jesus." Having made this bold confession, he was bound, and led as it were to execution. The judge gave secret orders to bring him back again, under the full hope, that the sight of the fire might overcome his resolution. Cyril, however, remained inflexible. The humanity of the judge induced him to continue his remonstrances. "Your fire and sword," said the dear boy, "are nothing—I go to a better house. Let me die presently." The spectators wept through compassion. "Ye should rather rejoice," said he; "ye know not what a city I am going to, nor what is my hope." Thus he went to his death, an example, truly illustrative of that scripture, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." Matt. xxi. 16.

'What a wonderful boy,' was the only remark which little Marion seemed able to

make. The Christian principle, that could give birth to such heroism in children like herself, was beyond her comprehension; while yet her tearful eye evinced a feeling of sympathy, which she could not perhaps well define, or express. She waited in thoughtful silence, while Stewart talked with his mother and cousins, of the tedious severity of the Dioclesian persecution—a persecution fraught with horrors so fearful and satanic, that humanity shrinks from the details which are recorded of it. Perhaps of the almost countless martyrdoms which took place, none affords a stronger testimony of the power of divine grace, than the instance of Romanus. The Governor who called upon him to renounce his religion, was a monster in cruelty; inflamed to the last degree by the stedfast courage and invincible firmness of the martyr. The tortures inflicted on him were too dreadful to be recorded here; but the meekness of his deportment under them is strikingly beautiful. "I thank thee," he said, "that thou hast opened unto me many mouths, wherein I may preach my Lord and Saviour Christ. Look how

many wounds I have, so many mouths I have, lauding, and praising God." It was commanded that his tongue should be rooted out. "He that speaketh Christ," said Romanus, "shall never want a tongue; think it not—the voice that uttereth Christ, hath no need of the tongue to be the minister." He was strangled, and died triumphantly, to the entire confusion of his enemies.

'What a death! and what a triumph!' observed Mrs. Graham.

'For this purpose,' returned Mary; "the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 'And oh, how sweet, and how realizing a comment do such instances afford, of death being indeed swallowed up in victory! "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy vietory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xv. 54—57.

'Dear Mary,' asked Emily, 'do you not remember, that that last verse constituted the almost dying words of dear Susan Smart?'

'Indeed I do, Emily.—Her mother,' she added, addressing herself to Mrs. Graham, 'was repeating them aloud, dwelling while she did so, on the faith of St. Paul.'

'And not only Paul,' said Susan, 'but *I*, a sinner saved by grace; *I too* can say, "Thanks be to God which giveth ME the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." It was nearly the last effort she made, for soon after she slept in Jesus.'

'It was an effort, worthy of all her remaining strength, my dear Mary; and must have been sweetly assuring, and comforting to her mother.'

'As a fresh dying testimony, it was indeed much to be remembered; but that dear child had so long lived in the faith, and hope, and obedience of the Christian, that there was room for nothing but full assurance of approaching glory in her end. But we are wandering from our appointed work; how is it, Stewart, that with your wonted strictness, you have not called us to order?'

'Because I was myself too much interested to wish to do so; and now it is too late to

re-commence, therefore if you can tell us any thing more of this sweet young friend of your's, Mary, pray do.'

'Suppose, Mary,' said Emily, 'you repeat to my aunt, and Stewart, those beautiful lines which were written by her minister for her monument. I believe they are by this time published, with other short poems of his, in a small volume; but as the work is very recent, they have not probably seen it.

'What shall we write on this memorial stone?
Thy merits? Thou didst rest on Christ's alone.
Our sorrows? Thou would'st blame the selfish tear.
Our love? Alas! it needs no record here.
Praise to thy God and ours? His truth and love
Are sung in nobler strains by Thee above.
What would'st thou have us write? A voice is heard—
"Write, for each reader write a warning word;
" O bid him look before him and within,
" Talk to his heedless heart of death and sin,
" And if at these he trembles, bid him flee
" To Christ—and find Him all in all like me."'

REV. H. F. LYLE.

CHAPTER VIII.

'JUST such another faithful centurion as we read of this morning in the 8th chap. of St. Matthew, is the martyr, whose "Last Words" I have to tell you of this evening, Marion,' said Stewart; 'and now, before we begin, will you show mamma that you remember my instructions, by telling her what a Centurion is?'

'The word Centurion,' replied the little girl, 'is derived from *centum*, the latin word for hundred; and means a Roman soldier, who had the command of a hundred men.'

'Gordius then was a centurion, but resigned his office, because it brought him into the service of those who persecuted the Christtians. Offended at his boldness, the Sheriff commanded the most inveterate torments to be laid on him; upon which, lifting up his eyes to heaven, Gordius sung from the 118th

Psalm, "The Lord is on my side: I will not fear: what man can do unto me!" And again, from the 23rd Psalm, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." On being led to execution, multitudes followed him weeping; "Weep not, I pray you, for me, but rather for the enemies of God; weep, I say, for them which prepare for us a fire, purchasing hell-fire for themselves in the day of vengeance; and cease, I pray you, to disquiet and molest my settled mind. I am ready, for the name of Christ, to suffer a thousand deaths, if need were." Others there were, who urged him to deny Christ with his mouth, and to keep his conscience to himself. "My tongue, which by the goodness of God I have, cannot be brought to deny the name of him who gave it; "for with the heart, men believe unto righteousness; and with the tongue, confession is made unto salvation."

'I so admire the truly scriptural replies of Gordius,' observed Mary; 'the language of inspiration seems almost to have given fresh strength to his invincible spirit. Fox says,

that his stedfast example encouraged all around. He suffered with another soldier called Menas, whose last words also, were very expressive of his devoted spirit. "There is nothing," said he, "that can be compared to the kingdom of heaven; neither is all the world, if it were weighed in the balance, able to be compared with the price of one soul. Wherefore then should I "fear them which kill the body, but have no more that they can do?" "Who is able to separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Then lifting up his eyes, he prayed thus: "I thank thee, O Lord God, which hast accepted me to be a partaker of thy precious death, and hast made me to remain constant unto the end." Thus fighting valiantly under the banner of Christ, Menas was beheaded; a true soldier of the cross.'

Many interesting details of martyrdoms, touching which, no last words were recorded; engaged the little party during the rest of the evening; Stewart reserving only a few minutes for the remarkable expression of forty persons, who were called to suffer together, as furnishing a subject of meditation for the head and heart to lie down upon, on going to bed. As they disrobed themselves for execution, they said, "We put off, not our clothes, but we put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts. We give thee thanks, O Lord, that with this our apparel, we may also put off by thy grace the sinful man; for by means of the serpent we once put him on, and by the means of Jesus Christ, we now put him off." 'That we may all do so this very night, and little Marion among the number, is my heart's desire,' said Mary, 'as she bent over the dear child, to bid her good night.'

'A verse in our Psalm this morning,' Stewart said, ('it was the 144th) when he joined the family party at breakfast; 'has so reminded me of the last words of our next martyr, over which my eye glanced last evening, that you

must allow me to repeat them to you; the connection has helped me to understand the force of the passage. Basilius mentions the circumstance, as one, evincing the remarkable fortitude of the martyr. Barlaam was his name; he was compelled to bear the most excruciating tortures, during which, his tormentors seeing some strength left in his right hand, put incense into it; and bringing him to the altar, where they used to sacrifice, hoped that the heat and force of the fire, would have scattered the burning incense upon the altar; but being assisted by God, to the disappointment of their expectations; Barlaam cried out in the first verse of our Psalm, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."'

'How very spirited and beautiful,' observed Emily! 'Thank you very much, dear Stewart, for so striking a comment upon the verse which I chose this morning, as the subject of my meditation for the day;' and her heart added a prayer, that she might indeed realize the strength of the Lord her God, as *her* strength and *her* portion—her sufficient strength against every possible evil.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN they met in the evening, Stewart prepared his auditors to expect a rich treat; for the martyrs whose last words he had to read to them, were men and women, of singularly devoted spirits.

'Scarcely a second Perpetua, I suppose,' observed Mrs. Graham.

'You shall judge of their comparative excellence yourself, mamma. But first, we have the story of Vincentius to consider, as given by Augustine, and it is beautifully written. "After unheard of sufferings," says our author, "he was cast into a dungeon, his feet made fast in the stocks; and there he was left alone, as to worldly comfort; but the Lord his God was with him. The Holy Spirit, whose office it is to comfort the afflicted people of God,

filled his heart with joy and gladness. "Hast thou prepared a terrible rack for the martyr's bed?" cried Vincentius. "The Lord shall make that bed soft and sweet unto him. Wouldest thou rend his bones and joints asunder? His bones, his joints, his hairs are all numbered, and shall all praise the Lord. Seekest thou to torment his flesh with wounds? The Lord shall pour abundantly into every one of them, the oil of gladness. All that thou can'st do, shall work contrary to thy expectation. Great plenty of joy shall he reap into the barn of his soul, out of this mighty harvest of pain, that thou dost inflict. Yea, thou shalt prove him VINCENTIUS indeed! A Vanquisher! A Triumpher! A Conqueror! Subduing thy madness, by his meekness; thy tyranny, by his patience; thy manifold means for his tortures, by the manifold graces of God, wherewith he is plentifully enriched." He suffered A. D. 313. He was stretched upon burning coals, and after his body was broiled thus, thrown upon heaps of broken tiles.'

'The extremity of the suffering,' observed Mary, 'only enhances the glory of the victory.

I almost thought, Stewart, that it was imprudent in you, to anticipate the enjoyment you had in store for us; since expectation, when highly raised, most generally sinks in disappointment; but if your other characters at all resemble that of the magnanimous Vincentius, I feel that such disappointment will not be the effect upon your hearers to-night.'

'It is about Julia, that Stewart is going to read next;' said little Marion, who had climbed on her brother's knee, to look at the picture of Vincentius' martyrdom; 'and then'—

'Stop, stop, little one,' cried Stewart, laying his hand gently on her mouth, 'one at a time if you please. Julia was a young woman whose earthly possessions were considerable. The Emperor coveted them, and gladly caught at the pretext, furnished by her profession of the Gospel, to pronounce her an outlaw, in not worshipping his gods. Julia hearing her sentence pronounced, said; "Farewell life, welcome death. Farewell riches, welcome poverty. All that I have, were it a thousand times more, would I rather lose, than speak a word against my God. I thank thee, O Father, for thy

grace, that I can contemn and despise this transitory world, and esteem Christ above all treasures." Then addressing her sisters, she said, "Oh! labour and travail after true godliness. Cease to accuse the fragility of our sex. What! are we not created after God's image and similitude? not only flesh did God use in the creation of the woman, in token of her infirmity and weakness; but bone of man's bone is she, in token that she must be strong in the true and living God. Wax weary, my dear sisters, of your lives led in darkness, and be in love with my Christ, my God, my Redeemer, my Comforter, which is the true light of the world. Persuade yourselves, or rather the Spirit of the living God persuade you, that there is a world to come; wherein the servants of sin shall be tormented perpetually—the servants of the High God shall be crowned eternally." With these words she embraced the fire, and slept sweetly in the Lord. And now, mamma, tell me, have I disappointed you, and is not Julia's martyrdom one of peculiar interest?'

'Indeed it is, Stewart, and manifests a

spirit worthy our admiration and praise. "Go and do thou likewise," shall be our closing text this evening then; for it is not only growing late, but we are come to a point in our record of the martyr's last words, which we shall do well to mark. Julia's history closes the account of those, who suffered during the first ten persecutions of the Christian church. The last, under Dioclesian, and Maximianus, and their two Cæsars, Maxentius and Licinius, which continued in all during ten years, was the most memorable and decided, of all the attempts of Satan, to overthrow the gospel of Christ. Since that time, he has never been able to persecute Christians, as such, within the extensive range of the Roman empire in Europe.

'Did not many British martyrs, suffer under the last-mentioned persecution?' asked Mrs. Graham.

'Yes, a very considerable number,' replied Mary. 'Rapin, I know, rests upon the circumstance, as one chief argument, to prove the early introduction of Christianity into Britain.'

'It strikes me,' returned her aunt, 'that it will be interesting, as well as useful, at this period of time, to deviate from our original plan of collecting only the martyrs' "Last Words;" and to connect with them some particulars of the early ecclesiastical history of Britain.'

'A very happy thought, indeed, mamma,' said Stewart; 'I shall however, beg to refer the task to Mary, who is so much more competent to it than I am; her comprehensive historical notes, so accurately arranged, enable her to do these things, with little, or no difficulty.'

'It will be well, if Stewart imitate his cousin in this respect,' replied his mother; 'lest, when Mary is not with us, we lose much interesting detail, through this want of information.'

'This I am already doing, my dear mother. While, however, we *can* hear our cousin, let us for our own sake do so; she will not I am sure, refuse to be thus employed: will you, dear Mary?'

'Oh, no, on the contrary, I shall readily

give you all the assistance I am able—you must, however, spare me this evening; by to-morrow, I hope to prepare a short summary of such incidents, as my notes may furnish me with.'

CHAPTER X.

LEST the relation of mere historical fact should prove tedious to her little girl; and weaken the interest she had hitherto felt, in being permitted to join the family, in their evening's occupation; Mrs. Graham provided some nice companions for the amusement of Marion; and while they made themselves happy in an adjoining room, the elders of the party assembled to read the sketch, which Mary had kindly prepared for them.

'Rapin, Milner, Mosheim, and Southey, are the authorities I have chiefly consulted,' she said, as she handed her manuscript to Stewart.

'And why not Fox,' he inquired.

'Fox's veracity is very much questioned,' replied Mary; 'perhaps he may not deserve

the rough treatment which some have given to him; but as in all historical matter of fact, truth, even in the smallest details, is essentially necessary; I have not thought it right, to rest the credibility of my stories, on his authority alone.'

'But why not on the same ground, doubt his veracity, in his account of the sufferings of the martyrs.'

'There is just this difference, Stewart. A love of the marvellous prevailed among our early historians; and Fox in no small degree partook of it. In recounting the glorious achievements of the martyrs, however, he found such a reality of heroism and magnanimity, as far exceeded any thing, which mere human imagination could invent; and which indeed left him nothing more to add, had he been desirous of so doing. In recording history, however, especially the early ecclesiastical history of Britain, the position of the compiler is far different. In his researches through the lapse of centuries, little more than dark uncertainty, and barbarous idolatry meet him on every side; besides which, he has to contend

with such a poverty of interesting matter, as must have been, not only trying, but tempting, to a mind, constituted as we may suppose his to have been. Under such circumstances then, it may be feared, that imagination was sometimes called in, to make up the defects of his historical picture; and by able judges, who have more critically studied our historian than we have done, I believe this is allowed to have been the case.'

'I never like to give up an old friend, whom I have learned to esteem,' said Stewart, 'and who has rendered me service; with all his imperfections, therefore, Fox is still a favourite author of mine;' and for a moment, leaving the little circle, he returned with Blunt's history of the Reformation in his hand. 'You must allow me to read to you a passage from this book, Mary,' he said, 'and Blunt's authority is not a despicable one. "For a history of that noble army of martyrs," says our author, "of whom it now becomes our business to speak, we are indebted to John Fox, himself an exile in Mary's reign, and like most of those who then lived abroad, a friend of the

Puritan principles at home. He had access to the archives and registers of the bishops; Grindall, who was himself a great collector of such materials, amongst others, supplying him with what he knew, and in many instances with the letters of the martyrs themselves; of all which documents," says Strype, "he has been found, by those who have compared his books, with his authorities, to have made a faithful use:" and then,' continued Stewart, 'having said much to the praise of Fox, he makes the following observation, "It is not thought out of place, to introduce this brief vindication of a book, which, so far as it is a contemporary history, has been, both of old, and of late, an object of unfair deprecation; but from which, no right-hearted Protestant can rise, without being at once a sadder, and a better man,—a book, out of which we shall now fearlessly draw our information, whilst we offer to our readers a few examples of those terrible sufferings, which it is at once humiliating to think that man could inflict, and animating to know that man could so nobly bear." What say you to this, Mary?'

'That I rejoice to hear Blunt speak thus, Stewart; as, however, we have ourselves vindicated Fox on the point of his martyrology, and have largely quoted from him, suppose we leave him here, and commence our reading of this sketch which I have prepared; otherwise we shall scarcely finish it this evening.'

Stewart began—'It is generally agreed I believe, that the gospel was preached in Great Britain soon after our Saviour's death, though the precise time is not known. Cornelius', the first Gentile conversion we hear of, took place A. D. 40. Rapin states, that if the conversion of the Britons began at all in the Apostles' days, the most probable time to be assigned, is that, between the victory of Claudius, and the defeat of Boadicea; for, at the time of the general revolt, there were in the island above 80,000 Romans, among whom were most probably some Christians. He seems also to favour the opinion, that St. Paul first preached the gospel in Britain. "It is certain," he says, "that in the eight years, between his first imprisonment at Rome, and his return to Jeru-

salem, he propagated the Christian religion in several places, especially in the Western countries; he mentions his design of going to Spain, and it is not unlikely, that his desire after conversion, might have carried him into our Island. It may, however, be concluded, that the Christian faith had taken no deep root in Britain; since, according to several authors, Lucius, a British king, sent ambassadors to Eleutherus, the twelfth bishop of Rome, A. D. 180, to desire him to send some Missionaries, for his instruction in the Christian religion; and surely, Lucius would not have sent so far, for that which his own country could have furnished, had there been many Christians then in Britain. The messengers of Lucius were catechized, baptized, and ordained bishops by Eleutherus, and being sent back to their own country, they were made the honoured instruments of greatly promoting the cause of Christ, in this our native land. From this time to the Dioclesian persecution, the history of the British church is almost entirely unknown; it is probable, however, that during that interval of eighty

years, the Christian religion made great progress in the island, since the multitude of British martyrs, that suffered during that persecution, was great. Constantius Chlorus was then Governor of Britain, but though favourable to Christianity, he could not set aside the severe orders of the Emperors. But when he came to the Empire, he put a stop to this violent persecution, and gave the Christians some respite. Under Constantine his son, still more good was effected. Then, the Christian religion flourished throughout the Roman empire, particularly in Great Britain, during a period of twenty-four years. Under this reign, Christians multiplied exceedingly, and the island abounded with churches. Many schools were opened, for the instruction of those who were designed for the church; and which produced many illustrious and devoted men. But the arrival of the Saxons sadly altered the state of things. These merciless idolaters not only trampled upon every thing relating to the Christian worship, but vented their rage against the Christians themselves. Bede, (who, from his being one of the earliest

ecclesiastical writers, is commonly called "The Venerable,") was a Saxon, and therefore, not likely to exaggerate, in his account of the cruelties of his countrymen; yet he thus expresses himself, "By the hands of the Saxons, a fire was lighted up in Britain, that served to execute the just vengeance of God, upon the wicked Britons, as he had formerly burnt Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The island was so ravaged by the conquerors, or rather by the hand of God, making use of them as instruments, that there seemed to be a continued flame from sea to sea, which burnt up the cities, and covered the surface of the whole isle. Public and private buildings fell in one common ruin. The priests were murdered on the altars; the bishop with his flock perished by fire and sword, without any distinction, no one daring to give their bodies an honourable burial." The only churches that were preserved amid this general devastation, were those of Wales, a mountainous district, into which the Saxons could not penetrate; and also in Cornwall, a remnant of British Christians found refuge. The light of the

gospel being thus cast out of the island, all traces of former piety ceased to exist; and for a century and a half, our country was immersed in its former darkness. A bright morning, however, succeeded; and we are now to see these very Saxons, from persecutors, becoming Christians, through the power of that God, in whose hand are the hearts of kings, and who turneth them whithersoever he will; sometimes to fertilize, and sometimes to lay waste. It was about one hundred and fifty years, after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, that some remarkable providences concurred, in reviving the work of Christianity. Ethelbert, the most considerable of the Anglo-Saxon monarchs, among those seven principalities, into which the island was now divided, married Bertha, the only daughter of Caribert, King of Paris, a descendant of Clovis. Ethelbert had been allowed to marry the French Princess, on the express condition that she should be permitted to make a free profession of Christianity, the faith in which she had been educated. Her principles were sound, her conduct consistent, and her influence over her

husband very considerable. While the King was in this favourable disposition, Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome, sent his famous Mission into our island, toward the close of the fifth century, in order to perfect the work just so happily begun. It consisted of forty Benedictine monks, with Augustine at their head. The circumstance that induced Gregory to send these missionaries, (I mean his seeing British children exposed for sale in the market-place at Rome,) is so well known, that I need not particularize it; suffice it to say, that in about sixty years after the arrival of Augustine, the establishment of Christianity was effected in England. The old British Christians however, who had retired into Wales, and had there established a Metropolitan see at St. David's, kept themselves distinct from the Anglo-Roman church, founded by Gregory, differed from it in many respects, and maintained its own independence." And here I believe we must pause, said Stewart, since it is the hour for family worship, and as much of our sketch remains to be read, as we have already gone through.

CHAPTER XI.

'A DELIGHTFULLY wet morning this,' said Stewart, as he came into the breakfast-room with his little sister in his arms. 'Mamma,' he added, 'I have promised Marion to plead with you and my cousins, to spend part of this rainy morning in finishing Mary's sketch.'

'And a very nice proposal too,' replied Mary; 'for we are all anxious to have our little Marion with us this evening.' Breakfast being laid aside therefore, the little party assembled; and Stewart observed, "that the next great outline, which followed the arrival of Augustine in our country's history, was the dissolution of the Saxon Heptarchy, and the descent of the Danes upon Britain; an event, which again obscured the light of the gospel in this land. The Britons now wholly em-

ployed in military affairs, seem to have found neither time, nor liberty, for the profession of religion ; and little to interest is scattered over the page of history, until the successful invasion of William the Conqueror. Then, the Papal power began to make more decided inroads into the national church, a circumstance, that may be regarded as the spring of all those remarkable events, which happened to her during several centuries. The soundness of a remark made by Rapin on this point, struck me so much, that I must give it to you. "The court of Rome, (he says), owes the progress and growth of its power, purely to its political prudence. The Popes wisely gave way to Princes of resolution and steadiness, while they vigorously proceeded against such whose circumstances would not permit them to oppose their designs." He gives us an instance of this, in the different conduct of the court of Rome, with regard to our first four Norman kings. "After yielding to the two Williams, she struggled long with Henry, but when she saw he was not to be conquered, she contented herself with what she would

have scorned, in the beginning of the contest. As for Stephen, she knew how to improve the troubles in his reign, and did so."

'The wily serpent was the secret agent in such proceedings,' observed Mrs. Graham, 'and for a while indeed his triumph seemed complete, "but the expectation of the wicked shall perish."'

'While,' returned Mary, "the hope of the righteous shall be gladness." We have first, however, to witness the triumph of error, continued Stewart, and to trace the true church, through her dark day of sorrow and abasement. Stephen's, I believe, was the last reign we noticed. In the succeeding one of Henry the Second, a council was held at Oxford, to examine the opinions of some Christians, whom they called Publicans; and who, it is supposed, were disciples of the Waldenses. In reply to the questions put to them, they said that they were Christians, and followers of the doctrine of the apostles. Great modesty, and meekness characterized these persons, and when threatened with death, in order to oblige them to renounce their tenets, they only said,

"Blessed are they that suffer for righteousness' sake." They were branded with a hot iron, and after much ill treatment, miserably perished. The well-known contest between this King and Thomas à Becket, proves the great ascendency, which Popery had gained in England, in the eleventh century. Excepting the Crusade, that celebrated enterprise, set on foot by Christians in Europe, to rescue the Holy City of Jerusalem from the hands of the Saracens, there is nothing of Ecclesiastical history to be noticed by us in Richard the First's reign; but the abject submission of John his successor, served to complete the power of the Pope; who now considered England, in the light of a conquered country. Of this, the reigns of John, and Henry the Third, afford ample testimony. Under Edward the First, the English began to seek effectual means for their deliverance; and in the latter part of Edward the Third, God raised up a powerful instrument, whereby to confute the errors of the Romish church, in the person of John Wickliffe, a man eminent for talent, educated at Merton College, Oxford, and

made Rector of Canterbury College, by the Archbishop of that diocese. Notwithstanding all that was done to prevent it, the doctrines of this great Reformer were spread through the kingdom with such success, that an historian affirms, "two men could not be found together, and one not a Lollard." Rightly, however, to understand the meaning of this remark, we must attend to what Rapin further informs us. "Wickliffe's opinions, (he says), tended to two principal ends, one to the government of the church, and to set bounds to the power of the pope, and clergy; the other, to expunge from the creed of the church, those doctrines which he thought contrary to Scripture." Now it being almost impossible, that Christians should return to the true faith of the church, while the clergy were bound to maintain established error; he strongly insisted upon the first point, as one absolutely necessary to the attainment of the second. No nation had more painfully experienced the rigour of papal dominion than England; it may therefore be said, that the people were Wickliffite, in regard to the first

point, but certainly not so, as to the second. This will account for many seeming inconsistencies, in the proceedings of the Parliament at that time, sometimes being found speaking and acting like Lollards, earnestly demanding, that the clergy should be dispossessed of their riches; and sometimes condemning these same Lollards to the flames, when they regarded them as contending against those doctrines, which long usage had sanctioned, and which they had been taught to venerate, as infallible. In about 1389, these persecuted Christians began to separate openly from the Church of Rome, and to appoint ministers of their own. This greatly offended the clergy, insomuch, that in the reign of Richard the Second, Edward's successor, the bishops obtained a general license, to imprison all heretics. Henry the Fourth went still further, and passed a statute, for burning all who should presume to write any book, or to teach, whether publicly or privately, any doctrine contrary to the Roman Catholic faith. No sooner was the statute passed, than the Ecclesiastical Court condemned William Sautre, parish

priest of St. Osithes, in London; he was burnt alive, A. D. 1401, and was the first, who suffered death in England as a Protestant.' 'And here, Mary, your account closes,' said Stewart, 'so that this evening I hope we may resume our plan, of collecting the martyrs' last words.

CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE the hour arrived, this kind brother took pains to make his little sister understand what the Papal power meant. He also gave her the meaning of the term Lollard, as he had himself learned it from Southey, Mosheim, and others; that it was a name, which had been given in the Low Countries, to the persecuted Franciscans and others, from their practice of singing hymns; LOLLEN, or LULLEN, in one of the old German dialects, signifying to sing, as a mother when she lulls her babe, or as reproachfully signifying "Tares among the wheat," LOLIUM being the Latin word for tares. She had read the reign of Henry the Fourth lately, in Mrs. Markham's History of England, and remembered the name of John Badby, as one who was burnt alive for the sake of his religion.

Stewart told her something about him, which Mrs. Markham had omitted; and that was, that the young Prince of Wales, afterwards the illustrious Henry V. chose to be present at the burning of this good man; and as Badby writhed with pain, under the torture he endured, the Prince ordered the fire to be removed, and promised him a pension for life if he would recant, but the martyr, finding his strength renewed, refused to comply, and suffered death with invincible courage, saying as he did so, "Mercy, Lord Jesus Christ, mercy."'

'Then I suppose,' said the little girl, 'that when young Prince Henry became King, he behaved very cruelly to the poor Christians.'

'Indeed he did, Marion; but he was driven to it by the wicked clergy. They loved their power and their riches, better than any thing beside, and when the parliament attempted to reduce their enormous, and ill-gotten wealth, they unjustly accused the Lollards of having instigated them to do so, and resolved to take vengeance on them, and to effect their destruction. They therefore seized upon Sir John

Oldcastle, or as he is generally called, lord Cobham, a great and a good man, who was zealously attached to the doctrines of Wickliffe; him they proposed to burn alive, in order to intimidate the whole sect,—but he escaped out of their hands.'

'Oh, I am so glad,' exclaimed Marion.'

'What will you say if they find him again?' asked Stewart.

'I shall be very sorry,—but did the King send to look for him?'

'No, the King seemed unwilling to have him pursued, and the clergy seeing this, formed a plan of making him believe that the Lollards had a design upon his royal person, and were forming conspiracies to overturn the state. A proclamation had been issued to prevent their assembling themselves together, but notwithstanding this, they continued their meetings, though with the utmost possible secrecy. As they could not assemble in houses for fear of being detected, they commonly chose some unfrequented spot in the country. London was not in those times, what it is now; St. Giles's fields was then

overgrown with trees and bushes. Here some of the Lollards proposed to meet. False brethren disclosed their intention to the clergy, who took immediate advantage of this occasion. They sent a message to the King, telling him that Oldcastle, with twenty thousand Lollards, was in St. Giles's Fields, and that their design was to kill the King, the Princes—his brothers, and all the Lords, spiritual and temporal, who were not their friends. The King believed the report. He went in person to confront them, and finding about eighty or a hundred persons, fell upon them; twenty were killed, and about sixty taken. Among the latter, some were found, who, awed by threats, confessed whatever their enemies put into their mouths, admitted that the report which the clergy had sent to the King was true, that Oldcastle was to have been made Regent of the kingdom, and that the conspiracy was formed under his direction. Rapin exposes the folly of Henry, in giving credit to so gross a fiction. Had he found twenty thousand men in arms in St. Giles', as he was made to believe, it would have been

very suspicious, he observes; but that eighty or a hundred men, among whom there was not a single person of rank, should have formed such a project, is extremely improbable. Besides, he himself knew Sir John Oldcastle to be a man of sense; and yet what could be more unreasonable, than that he should attempt to execute such a project, with a handful of men, without being present himself, or there being any other leader to supply his place. However, the King thought him guilty, and in that belief, set a thousand marks upon his head, with a promise of perpetual exemption from payment of taxes, to any town that should secure him. At length he was seized in Powis-Land, North Wales, by John Grey, Lord Powis, and was sentenced by the clergy to be hung up by the middle with a chain, and burnt alive.'

'How very shocking,' observed little Marion, 'and was this really done Stewart?'

'It really was, and that part of London called Tyburn, was so named, from its having been the place where Lord Cobham was *tied up and burned*. After the execution, fresh

statutes were enacted, in order to the utter extirpation of the Lollards. Some were burnt alive, some left the kingdom, and others, through fear of death, abjured their religion.'

'Poor people,' said the dear child, 'I suppose Stewart, that Wickliffe, who taught them these things, had long been dead, or they would have burned him.'

'Indeed they would Marion, but he was beyond their reach, having been received into glory:

> 'Where the wicked cease from troubling,
> And the weary are at rest.'

All the enemies of Wickliffe could do to express their hatred of him, was already done, for forty years after his death, they opened his grave, took out his bones, burnt them to ashes, and in scorn threw them into a neighbouring brook.'

'Fuller's observation on this act is very beautiful,' said Mary. 'This brook,' he says, 'conveyed *his* ashes into Avon—Avon into Severn—Severn into the narrow seas, then into the main ocean; and thus the ashes of

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Wickliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over.'

'Then I suppose,' observed Marion, 'that people in other parts of the world beside England, were burnt for thinking as Wickliffe did.'

'Yes, there were many in almost every part of Europe, for the Papal power prevailed throughout Christendom, and the next martyr we shall speak of were two Bohemians of Prague.'

'What were they called, Stewart?'

'To-morrow evening I hope to tell you, but (showing her his watch,) it must not be to-night, Marion, must it?'

CHAPTER XIII.

'JOHN HUSS, and Jerome of Prague, are the names of our Bohemian martyrs, Marion,' said Stewart. 'It appears from Rapin's account, that there were many Bohemian students in the college at Oxford, where Wickliffe was educated, who embraced his opinions, and propagated them in their country.'

'And how were John Huss, and Jerome of Prague martyred?' asked Marion, 'were they burned?'

'Yes, they were; and the story of their last hours is very deeply interesting. When John Huss heard the sentence which the Council of Constance passed against him—'

'Just tell me before you go on,' said Marion, 'what the Council of Constance means?'

'A council consists of the bishops, or leading rulers of the church, who assemble from different Christian countries at a given spot, to consider and order the affairs of the church at large, and because this council met at Constance, it was so called.'

'Thank you, dear Stewart; and now will you go on, and tell us what John Huss said?'

'If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him,' were his truly Christian words. The unjust council accused him falsely of holding many blasphemous doctrines, which, so often as he attempted to refute, he was commanded to hold his peace. He prayed to be heard, that those persons who were present, might not credit what was reported of him, but prevailing nothing, he fell on his knees, committing himself to God. "O Lord Jesus Christ," he said, "whose word is openly condemned in this council, unto Thee do I appeal, who, when Thou wast evil intreated of thine enemies, didst appeal unto God thy father, committing thy cause unto a most just judge, that by thy example, we thine oppressed ones should flee unto Thee." When the sentence

was ended, kneeling down, he thus prayed for his accusers; "Lord Jesus Christ, forgive mine enemies, forgive them I say for thy great mercies' sake." He was then robed in all his priestly garments, and seven bishops were chosen to degrade him, by stripping them from his body, upon which he remembered the vesture which Herod put upon Jesus to mock him; thus in all things, comforting himself by the example of Christ. One of these bishops first took away the chalice, or cup from him, saying, "O cursed Judas, why hast thou forsaken the counsel and ways of peace, and hast counselled with the Jews? we take away from thee this chalice of thy salvation." "But I trust in God the Father, and my Lord Jesus Christ," answered John Huss, "for whose sake I suffer these things, that he will not take away the chalice of his redemption, but have a stedfast hope that this day, I shall drink thereof in His kingdom.' Each bishop in order followed, taking off the vestment they had severally put on, each one giving him their curse. They next resorted to the dreadful torture of raising the

skin from his head, instead of which, they put on him a crown of paper, with the form of devils painted on it.'

Marion quite shuddered, and seemed to dread hearing any more.

'The martyr's faith overcame all the cruelty of his enemies,' said Stewart encouragingly. "My Lord Jesus, my Lord Jesus Christ did wear a crown of thorns for my sake," was his beautiful reply, "why should not I then for *His* sake wear this light crown, be it never so ignominious? Truly I will do it, and that willingly." The Bishop said, "Now we commit thy soul unto the devil," "but I," said John Huss, lifting his eyes toward heaven, "do commit my spirit into thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ, my spirit which thou hast redeemed." In the fire he sang with a loud voice, "Jesus Christ, the son of the living God, have mercy on me," until the flame deprived him of the power of utterance. His martyrdom took place about the year 1415. Jerome of Prague very soon followed him, and the circumstances of their trial and degradation are so nearly alike, that I need not repeat them. When

led to execution, Jerome sang loudly and cheerfully the canticles of the church, and among his last words were these addressed to the people, " Dearly beloved children, even as I have sung, so do I believe: this creed is my whole faith, I die for the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ." In the fire he triumphed gloriously, and when surrounded with flames, sang, " Into thy hands, O Lord Jesus, I commend my spirit. O Lord God, Father Almighty, be merciful unto mine offences, for thou knowest how sincerely I have loved thy truth."

' The sight of such constancy, must have been most grating to the feelings of the council,' observed Emily.

' It must indeed ;' returned Stewart, ' and the result that sprung from it still more so; for numbers were led by the example of these martyrs, to acknowledge the truth, and to feel the power of those doctrines, in defending which, they counted not their own lives dear unto themselves. But to return to England The Lollards were persecuted sometimes more, sometimes less, according to the charac-

ter of the kings. We have seen what the feelings of Henry the Fifth were towards them. Henry the Sixth was a weak man, ever ready to act upon the impressions that he received from those around him; in his reign, little thought was bestowed upon religion. For the same reason, the reign of Edward the Fourth was not disturbed, either by the Lollards or their adversaries. The reigns of Edward the Fifth, and Richard the Third, were wholly spent in domestic troubles, which had no influence on the affairs of the church. As for Henry the Seventh, he took care to keep the church on the same footing in which he found it; to secure the crown to himself and to his heirs, and to heap up money, were his sole designs; while, however, the authority of the Romish church was such, that every other interest was made subservient to it. Persecutions awaited all who dared to oppose her despotic influence. I have selected the martyrdom of Lawrence Ghest, one of those who suffered at Salisbury during the reign of Henry the Seventh as well worthy our notice. He was sentenced to be burnt

alive; when he was tied to the stake, his cruel persecutors brought his wife and seven children to him, hoping by this means to shake his constancy, by thus working upon his tender feelings as a parent. At sight of his dear offspring, however, love to his God overcame natural affection, he remained immoveable, answering the prayers and intreaties of his wife thus: "My wife, be content: be not a block in my way. I am in a good course, running toward the mark of my great salvation. Not only will I renounce wife and children, but myself, to follow Christ."'

'Ah! there spoke the true spirit of a disciple,' exclaimed Mary, with much delight. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." Matt. x. 37—39. 'Lawrence Ghest surely received these injunctions of Christ not in word only, but in power; and the spirit failed

him not in the evil day when called to ACT upon them. Oh! how rare an instance does he afford of true discipleship. Would that we had more of this spirit of love to Christ, and of unreserved obedience to His will, that "whether we live, we may live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we may die unto the Lord."'

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN the little party met on the following evening, Stewart said, 'We are now to become acquainted with that great reformer Martin Luther, who, in the early part of the sixteenth century, held up the light of the gospel with a steadiness, that exposed the darkness of the Romish Church, so as it never had been exposed before. Will Marion, therefore remember that the persecuted followers of Christ will be called for the future after their new leader, Lutherans.'

'And are good John Wickliffe and John Huss to be now quite forgotten?'

'Oh no; Luther was himself a follower of the doctrines they professed, Marion, and he taught the same, only more boldly and more effectually; but it has ever been, and is now

customary for the sake of distinction, and too often in token of reproach, to call bodies of Christians after the name of the person, whose peculiar doctrines they are supposed exclusively to profess, and to be guided by.'

'What then is the name that is given to mamma, and Mary, and Emily,' asked the little girl with some degree of curiosity.

'If we must have a name at all, Marion,' replied her mother, 'the one we would choose is that which Paccian, a good bishop of Barcelona, desired for himself. "My name," said he "is CHRISTIAN, and my surname is CATHOLIC."'

'And who was Luther, Stewart?'

'He was a Saxon, a native of Isleben, a town in the county of Mansfeld, where he was born 1483. He early manifested a strong desire after religious knowledge, and speaks of his accidentally finding a Latin Bible, as a treasure which even then, he knew how to value. He tells a story too of his having met, when very young, with a book, entitled, "The Sermons of John Huss." "I was anxious," he says, "to know the doctrines of this arch-

heretic. My astonishment in the reading of them was incredible. What, thought I, could move the council to burn so great a man? But then the name of John Huss was held in abomination, and I therefore shut the book, comforting myself with the thought, that perhaps he had written it before he fell into heresy."'

'He did not think then, that he should become even a worse heretic himself, did he, Marion?'

'No, I dare say not; but was Luther burnt alive as a martyr?'

'No; he died a natural death. I suppose, however, that I am to understand by that question, that you are wishing to hear some 'Last Words' of the martyrs.'

'It is a long time since we had any Stewart, and I was thinking that such a man as Martin Luther, would have said some very beautiful things.'

'His last words, spoken in his own bed will not disappoint you, Marion. As he took the lead in preaching those doctrines for which so many afterwards suffered, we must by no

means overlook the account of his dying moments. After an illness of a very few days, (occasioned by his exposure to cold, when journeying on an errand of mercy,) he found his end approaching. He therefore summoned his family, and having taken his leave of them, commended himself thus devoutly to God. "O eternal and merciful God, my heavenly Father, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and God of all consolation; I thank thee that thou hast revealed to me thy Son Jesus Christ, in whom I have believed, whom I have preached, whom I have confessed, whom I love and worship, as my dear Saviour and Redeemer, whom the Pope, and the multitude of the ungodly do persecute, revile, and blaspheme. I beseech thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, receive my soul! O heavenly Father, though I am snatched out of this life, though I must now lay down this body; yet know I assuredly, that I shall dwell with thee for ever, and that none can pluck me out of thy hands!" He then repeated the words, "Into thine hands I commend my spirit, thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth"—also that verse of the

sixty-eighth Psalm, "Our God is the God of whom cometh salvation; God is the Lord, by whom we escape death"—and finally, the 16th verse of the 3rd of St. John's gospel, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."'

'And did that text, indeed, comprehend the last words of Martin Luther?' said Mrs. Graham. 'There is something remarkable in it; for in that single verse, we have an epitome of what he preached and taught during his useful life, all which, "being dead, he yet speaketh."'

'And now,' said Stewart, 'interesting as is every thing connected with this great reformer, I believe we must leave him, and pass on to the martyrdoms of his disciples. Among the first, were those in Germany and France, and although *many* of their dying words are not recorded, yet the few that I can find are very deeply interesting. Henry Voes, a young man only twenty-four years old, and John Esch, both of Brussels, who had formerly been of the order of the Augustine Friars, were

deposed and spoiled of their Friar's weeds, because they would not retract, and deny the doctrines of Luther. One of the questions put to Henry was, whether Luther had seduced him or not. "Yea," said he, "even as Christ seduced his Apostles." As they were being led to the place of execution, they sang joyfully, continually declaring that they died for the glory of God, and the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ, believing and following the holy church of the Son of God. They embraced the stake, praising God, and singing psalms in testimony of their faith. A certain doctor beholding their joy, said to Henry, "Take heed, and do not so foolishly glorify yourself." "God forbid," replied the young martyr, "that I should glory in any thing save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Another counselled him to have God before his eyes, and fear. "I trust that I carry him truly in my heart," said Henry. When the fire was kindled, "Methinks ye do strew roses under my feet," was the remark they both made, so joyful to them was the prospect of glorifying God, whether by life or by death.'

'Some words very like those,' observed Mary, 'were spoken by one of our English martyrs; and I have a very pleasing anecdote in store for you Marion, connected with them.'

Marion would like to have heard it then, but as she remembered that Stewart had some German persecutions to read about, she suppressed her wish, and asked her brother to go on with Fox.

'Patience always meets with its reward,' he said, affectionately kissing the little girl, 'and I scarcely think that Mary's story would interest you more, than the "Last Words" of John Carpenter, a Bavarian, who was burned at Munich. He was strongly persuaded to recant, (that is, publicly to retract what he had before asserted,) from the articles of the gospel. Every possible method was resorted to, that might tend to work upon his feelings. Among the rest, his wife and children's desolate condition was pressed upon him. "My wife and children," said the holy man, "are so dearly beloved by me, that they cannot be bought from me, for all the riches and possessions of the Duke of Bavaria; but

for the love of my God, I will willingly forsake them." Some Christian brethren asked him as soon as he was in the fire, to give some sign or token what his faith was. "This shall be my sign and token," replied the martyr, "that so long as I can open my mouth, I will not cease to call upon the name of Jesus." When he was fastened to the stake, and the executioner put a bag of gunpowder about his neck, he said, "Let it be so, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and in the fire he cried out with a loud voice, "Jesus, Jesus;" and so joyfully yielded up his spirit.'

'He did not then forget the promised sign,' observed Marion.

'No; it afforded him an opportunity, whereby to strengthen his brethren; and this effect it had: so that many were encouraged to follow his example. One of those was Leonard Keyser, a townsman of John Carpenter. "O, Lord Jesus!" he said as he went to the stake, "remain with me, sustain me, help me, and give me force and power." Then the wood was set on fire, and in the midst of burning, he cried out strongly, "O

Jesus, I am thine! have mercy upon me, and save me."'

'How strikingly is the unity of the Spirit exhibited in the conduct of these martyrs,' observed Mary, 'of whatever nation or kindred it matters not. "There is *one* body, and *one* Spirit, even as ye are called in *one* hope of your calling; *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. iv. 4—7.'

'Blessed unity,' replied Mrs. Graham, 'and one that we shall only fully know and enjoy, when we stand up with "that great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, having palms of victory in our hands;" singing the *one* song of, "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Rev. vii. 9, 10. But to return to the martyrs.'

'Not to-night, dear mamma, the hours steal so pleasantly away, that I too would fain believe it were yet early; but that undeviating

time-piece before me tells of five minutes to nine.'

'Is it possible?' replied Mrs. Graham; and as she led her little girl away, Mary repeated to Stewart the following stanza, from a favourite poem of her's,—

"Be mine, not wholly to mispend
The hours he yet may deign to lend;
But far from sin and folly flee,
And live to him, who died for me."

CHAPTER XV.

'WE are this evening to consider the persecutions in France,' said Stewart, when they met. 'The light of the Reformation soon shone into that country; Margaret, queen of Navarre, sister to Francis I. who was then king, being favourable to the principles of Luther. Francis himself, however, had no fixed principles of religion; he either favoured, or persecuted the Protestants, as best answered his own private interests or political views; and is therefore seen at one time treating them with the utmost equity and gentleness, at another, exercising the most horrible cruelty against them. Aymond de Lauoy, of Bourdeaux, was a Protestant minister, and when threatened with persecution, was persuaded by his friends to fly for safety. "I had rather

never be born, than do so," said the devoted man, "it is the office of a good shepherd, not to fly in time of peril, but rather to abide; lest the flock be scattered, or lest they should have some scruple in their minds, that the doctrine I have fed them with, be but dreams and fables. I fear not to yield up both soul and body, in the quarrel of the truth I have taught, and am ready with St. Paul, not only to be bound for the testimony of Christ in the city of Bourdeaux, but also to die." As he was conducted to the place of execution, he sang the 118th Psalm, exhorting his fellow prisoners to put all their confidence in the Lord. To his students he spoke while on the scaffold, "I exhort you to study and learn the gospel; for "the word of the Lord abideth for ever;" labour to know the will of God, and fear not them that kill the body, but have no power over your souls." His last words were, "My flesh lusteth against the Spirit; but shortly I shall cast it away—brethren, pray for me; O Lord my God, into thy hands I commend my spirit." We have another no less interesting martyr than this faithful Ay-

mond, in the person of Ann Audebert, of Orleans; her words were few, but very holy and resolute—when the rope was put about her, she called it "her wedding girdle, wherewith she should be married to Christ;" and Saturday being fixed on for her martyrdom, she said, "On a Saturday I was first married, and on a Saturday I shall be married again."'

'Was not her spirit lovely, Mary?'

'Indeed, it was; but is there nothing more written of her?'

'Only that her singular constancy astonished all the spectators; but I must not allow any of your remarks just now: for it is on the stroke of nine, and there is one short account of the last words of the martyrs in France, which I should like to finish this evening. It refers to a master and his servant, who were led to the stake together. The latter, a very young man, began to weep when he saw the preparations for their burning. His master, fearing his constancy, ran to him, comforted, and strengthened him; they then sang a Psalm together. As they were in the fire, this good man, standing upright near the stake, shifted

the fire from himself to his servant, the period of whose suffering he thus shortened, having compassion for him, because his faith was the weakest; and when he saw him dead, he bowed down into the flame, and so slept in Jesus.'

'How beautifully disinterested,' observed Mrs. Graham. 'That action bespoke indeed the love "that endureth all things, and that seeketh not her own."'

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN they met on the following evening Stewart said, 'In telling you that I had no more "Last Words" to record about the martyrdoms in France, I overlooked the dreadful massacre of a whole body of faithful men and women, who were engaged in a room at Paris, in the most sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper. The sufferings inflicted on those among them who were unable to escape, were awful: but God was greatly glorified. Rebezies and Frederic Danville, two brothers, were threatened with the rack, if they would not commend themselves to God, and the Virgin Mary. "God (they nobly answered) is able enough to guard us, and to save us out of the lion's mouth." And when preparation was being made to torture them, they cried

out, "Come, Lord Jesus, and show thy strength, that man do not prevail." God did mightily assist them, and when after all this suffering, they were taken from the rack to be burned; and again, a cross was presented to them, and they were urged to believe in the Virgin Mary. "Let God (said they) reign alone." They prayed earnestly in the fire, and one of them comforting the other, said, "Be strong, my brother, be strong. Satan, away from us!"—"These men call upon Satan," cried out the priests triumphantly. The people eagerly listened; and the voices of the martyrs audibly engaged in solemn prayer to God, defeated the malicious accusation of their enemies.'

'They overcame,' said Mrs. Graham, "and to him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Rev. ii. 7.

'Here then my dear mamma,' said Stewart, 'we close the history of the French persecutions. The numberless martyrs who suffered under the iniquitous sentence of the inquisition in Spain, afford us but few last words,

because of the secresy with which, in many instances, they were put to death. For an account also of the persecutions in *Calabria*, under Pope Pius IV. where the Reformers were led like sheep and lambs to the slaughter; as well as the trials of the church in *Provence*, where whole villages and towns, men, women, and children, were indiscriminately destroyed, I must refer you to the different histories which have been written respecting them. It being Marion's bed-time, the rest of the little party conversed awhile on the horrors of the inquisition; and not without feelings of gratitude and praise, did they compare with that awful state of things, their own liberty of conscience, and that peaceful abode under the shadow of their own vine and fig-tree, none making them afraid, which they were permitted to enjoy.'

CHAPTER XVII.

'ARE we to begin the English martyrs this evening, Stewart?' asked little Marion, as she took her seat by her brother.

'Yes, we are, and among the first, Thomas Bilney is one, whose faith and constancy will ever be held in deserved reverence. He had been brought up from a child at Cambridge, and at a very early age, relinquished other studies for that of divinity. Convinced of sin by the power of the Spirit, he became burdened under its weight, and having been enjoined by the priests to seek his peace in masses, fasting, and the purchase of indulgences, he followed their counsel, until his feeble constitution; through the various acts of penance which he was required to perform, was almost exhausted. At this time, hearing of the New

Testament which Erasmus had published, he bought one. On first opening it, his eye rested on 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Here Thomas Bilney found comfort and soul rest, and by a frequent perusal of the word of life, his faith became confirmed, and he began to preach to others that great salvation, which he himself had found. It was not long before he was accused before Tonstal, bishop of London. He was found guilty, was persuaded to recant, and was subjected to no further punishment, than to bear a faggot to St. Paul's cross.'

'What does bearing a faggot mean?' asked Marion.

'It was a badge of disgrace, invented by the clergy of the Romish church, to mark such as could be induced to abjure, or give up the faith of Christ which they professed. Many poor creatures, who from terror were forced to this sad alternative, were fastened to a stake by the neck with towels, and their hands held fast, while they were marked on the

cheek with a hot iron, and this was called branding; after which, they were for life to wear a faggot, worked or painted on the left sleeve, and if they at any time ventured to lay it aside, they were immediately burnt. Through the humanity of the Bishop of London, Bilney was not branded, and only compelled to wear the badge of the faggot for a time.'

'But if he gave up the faith of Christ, why was he martyred?' asked Marion.

'Thomas Bilney had no peace,' replied Stewart, 'after he had denied Christ. Like Peter, he "wept bitterly," no one could comfort him; he thought that the whole Scripture sounded his condemnation, and that God was against him. In this state he continued two whole years, when his spirit was set at liberty, and he resolved boldly and openly, to confess the faith he had been tempted to abjure. As you may suppose, the consequence was death. A writ was immediately issued for burning him. He was apprehended in Norwich. The night before he was to suffer, some friends who visited him in prison, found him quite

composed and cheerful. One of them, reverting to his approaching trial, observed "that his pains would be short, and that the spirit of God would support him in them." Bilney, upon this, put his finger into the candle that was burning before him, "I feel," said he, "that fire is naturally hot, yet I am persuaded by God's holy word, and by the experience of some saints recorded there, that in the flame they may feel no heat, and in the fire no consumption." 'To what saints do you think he referred, Marion?'

'To the three captive Jews, who were cast into the burning fiery furnace, and yet felt no heat,' replied the little girl.

'True, dear child; well, this history very greatly comforted Thomas Bilney. "I constantly believe," he said, "that, however the stubble of my body be wasted by it, yet my soul and spirit shall be purged thereby: a pain for the time, whereon followeth joy unspeakable." He comforted himself greatly in that sweet promise contained in Isaiah xliii. 1—3. "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy

name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour;" which passage he applied so comfortably to his own case, and to those around him, that some of them, receiving the words as the legacy of a blessed martyr, caused them to be written in tables, or in books which they carried about with them, and derived comfort from them till their dying day. On the following morning he was led to execution. One of his friends exhorting him at the prison door, to take his death patiently and constantly, Bilney answered, "When the mariner is tossed upon the troubled sea, he beareth his perils better, in hope that he shall yet reach his harbour; so, whatever storms I shall feel, my ship will soon be in its quiet haven; thereof I doubt not, by the grace of God; and I intreat you, help me with your prayers to the same effect." The place of execution was

a low valley, surrounded with rising ground, and it was chosen for these executions, that the people might see the spectacle from the ascent; and from the frequency of such spectacles, it was called '*the Lollard's Pit.*' There was a ledge upon the stake, to raise the victim, that he might be the better seen; and upon this ledge, having put off the layman's gown, in which, after his degradation, he had been clad: Bilney knelt and prayed with deep and quiet devotion, ending with the 143rd Psalm, from which he thrice repeated the verse, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." He then put off his jacket and doublet, and asked the officers if they were ready. Warner, his friend, came to bid him farewell, but could not speak for weeping. "O my friend," said Bilney, "feed your flock, feed your flock, that when the Lord cometh, he may find you so doing. Farewell, and pray for me." He was then chained to the stake, the dry reeds were kindled, and in a few minutes, Bilney, triumphing over death, rendered up his soul in the fulness of faith,

with his last breath, calling on the name of Jesus, Jesus.'

'Blessed saint,' observed Mrs. Graham, 'and how far happier while enduring the sufferings of martyrdom, than when torn by the contending emotions of his guilty conscience, under a sense of having denied his Lord.'

'His example,' said Stewart, 'in all points, was soon followed by James Bainham; he too was tempted to abjure, but a month had scarcely elapsed, before he stood up in the face of the congregation in St. Austin's church, with the English Testament in his hand; and openly proclaiming that he had denied the truth, declared that if he did not return to it, that book would condemn him at the day of judgment; and exhorted all who heard him, rather to suffer death, than fall as he had fallen; for all the world's good would not induce him, again to feel such a hell as he had borne within him, since the hour of his abjuration. He was accordingly brought to the stake in Smithfield, and there to the astonishment of the spectators, when the extremities of his body were half consumed, he cried

aloud, "O ye Papists, ye look for miracles, and behold a miracle; for in this fire I feel no pain; it is to me as a bed of roses."

Marion looked up expressively at her cousin Mary.

'You catch the resemblance between Bainham's "last words," and those of the two young men who were burnt at Brussels.'

'I do; and I remember also your promise to tell me a story connected with them.'

'The story, dear Marion, is about a little girl, the daughter of Mrs. Savage, and grandchild of good Philip Henry. She was a holy, sweet, dutiful, humble child. She had made a wonderful progress in the grace of God, and when dying, many excellent things dropped from her. Among others, she said, "When I have formerly read of that martyr in flames, who said he felt no more pain than if on a bed of roses, I knew not then what he meant, but I bless God I know now, and am so swallowed up of joy, as not to regard any outward pain."'

'How much I do wonder, dear mamma, when I hear such things as these about little children. I cry only when I have a tooth-ache,

or a pain in my head. Why is it, mamma, that I do not love Jesus Christ as this little girl loved him? I should not care about pain then.'

Tears filled Mrs. Graham's eyes as she looked at her child; she could not speak, but turning to Matthew vii. 7, 8. she gave her little girl the passage to read: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

'I have often asked,' said Marion; as she walked with her mother to the nursery.

'"Ye ask, and ye receive not, because ye ask amiss," is the language of scripture in another place.'

'Then who will teach me how to ask as I ought? Will God, mamma?'

'He will, my child.' And kneeling down, Mrs. Graham pleaded earnestly, that the Spirit might be poured out on this precious pledge which the Lord had given to her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'THE book which Bainham held up in the church, when he proclaimed his repentance,' said Stewart, when they again met, 'was Tindal's translation of the New Testament; now one of the rarest volumes, in the collections of the curious; and in its effects upon this nation, one of the most important that ever issued from the press. Nothing could be more alarming to the Romanists, than that there should be a free circulation of the scriptures; for they knew well, that the doctrines and usages of their church, could ill stand the test of such a standard. No sooner therefore, was it discovered, that copies of this translation were industriously circulated in England, and eagerly bought, than orders were given for delivering up all such copies into the hands

of the priest, and for burning them. Tonstal, the Bishop of London, who of all the Romish prelates, was the most averse to the cruelties in which he was engaged; employed a merchant, secretly to purchase the copies that remained in Tindal's hands, as the easiest and surest method of preventing their circulation. Now it so happened, that this merchant was a friend of Tindal, and being desirous of correcting the translation, he gladly sold them, and with the money, printed an improved edition. Thus wonderfully did God overrule all things, to promote the free course of that Word of Eternal Truth, which could alone diffuse light into the gross darkness that then covered the land. A spirit of inquiry had now been roused, which no persecution could suppress. Dangerous as it was to possess the book, it was eagerly sought for; and of those who dispersed it, some were punished by the infliction of a most rigorous penance; others by fines, and penalties; and some by martyrdom. At length Tindal himself was treacherously betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He was strangled, and then burnt. His

"Last Words" were "Lord, open the eyes of England's king."'

'The important change that immediately succeeded the death of this "*Apostle of England,*" as Fox calls him, was almost an answer to his prayer,' observed Mary.

'To what do you refer?' asked Mrs. Graham.

'To the marriage of Henry with Anne Boleyn, an event, which, preceded as it was by the king's denial of the supremacy of the Church of Rome, was of vital importance in forwarding the reformation. It was now enjoined by the king's authority, that the whole Bible, both in Latin and English, should be placed in the choir of every parish church; and that all men should be encouraged and exhorted to read it, as the very word of God. That word, of which the great philosopher, Mr. Locke so nobly says, "It has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth without any mixture of error for its matter."'

'Then, I suppose the king's heart was changed, Stewart; was it not?'

'No, Marion; would it had been so! we should not then, have so many cruel histories to give you, as we have now, of the sufferings of the dear people of God, under the government of Henry the Eighth. Indeed, the very next martyr of whom I have to tell you, and whose name is John Lambert, was opposed by the king himself in person. As supreme head of the church, Henry convened a meeting of the bishops, clergy, nobility, and mighty men of the land, at Westminster Hall, and in their presence, examined and confuted John Lambert, and then proceeded to pronounce sentence of death against him, as being an heretic. Lambert, who on this trying occasion, ably maintained his opinions, replied, that "he committed his soul to God, and submitted his body to the king's clemency." He was burnt alive, and in a very barbarous manner, at Smithfield; for when his legs and thighs were burnt to the stumps, there not being fire enough to consume the rest of him, two of the officers raised up his body on their halberds or pikes; he being yet alive, and crying out, "None but Christ—none but

Christ;" and then they let him fall down into the fire, where he was quickly consumed to ashes. It is painful to think that Cranmer, Taylor, Barns, and Cromwell, should have been instrumental in forwarding the death of this faithful man. Fox says, that as he was being led to prison, Cromwell asked his forgiveness; and we may hope that this is true, as it shows, that the mind of this great minister of state, was not quite void of serious conviction. Truly, he then little thought how short was his own time for repentance.

The cruel Henry enacted some laws, which were called "The Six Articles," and which caused the death of hundreds of persons in England.'

'What were they Stewart, can you make me understand them?'

'I fear not, Marion; however, I will try what I can do. You have often read, that Jesus, the night before his death, took bread, which, when he had broken and blessed, he gave to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." And that he also in

like manner consecrated the cup,—you remember this, Marion?'

'Quite well, Stewart; my catechism teaches me, that the bread, signifies the body, and the wine, the blood of Christ; and I have sometimes remained in the church, while dear mamma has taken the bread and wine, in remembrance of the Saviour's love to her.'

'Well, one of the errors of the Romish church is, that her members are required to believe, that after the Priest has blessed the bread and wine, the very *nature* and *substance* of these elements, are changed into the *real* body and *real* blood of Christ.'

'O Stewart, can it be really true that they believe this?'

'Yes; and it was enacted, that if any did speak, preach, or write against this first article, they were to be judged heretics, to be burnt without mercy, and to forfeit their real and personal estate to the king.—The second was, that *by the law of God*, communion in both kinds was not necessary to salvation to *all* persons; although Jesus himself, as we well know, commanded both to be taken, the wine as

well as the bread.—The third was, that it was not lawful for Priests, being such, to marry.—The fourth, that vows of chastity, that is, the vows of nuns and monks, must be observed.—The fifth, that the use of private masses ought to be continued.—And—sixth, and lastly, that auricular confession, that is, the secret confession of our sins to a Priest, ought to be retained in the church.'

'That the people of England, should ever have been seriously commanded to believe such absurdity, seems now scarcely to be credited,' observed Emily; 'and that such a creed, should so long have swayed the minds of thousands, nay, that it should still do so, is proof indeed, of the power of the Prince of darkness.'

'It is strikingly so,' replied Stewart, 'Fox tells us, that these articles were called, "*The whip with six strings,*" from the cruel effects which they produced.'

'And was there no one found among the king's ministers, bold enough, to point out to him the cruelty of such a procedure?' asked Emily.

'Bishops Latimer and Shaxton,' said Stewart, 'immediately resigned their bishoprics, and were committed to prison. Cranmer argued against the articles in the house with great ability; and by the king's desire, (for Henry VIII. highly respected this minister's wisdom,) delivered in his reasons in writing. Fox tells a curious story, respecting the fate of this written refutation of Cranmer's :—" Having taken much pains to collect from Scripture authority, and from the Fathers, all the arguments he had advanced; the archbishop gave the MS. to his secretary, Ralph Morrice, to transcribe; strictly commanding him to deliver it, when finished, into no other hands than his own. Just as Morrice had completed his work, and was setting out for Westminster-Hall, to the archbishop; a message reached him from his father, desiring that he would immediately go to London on urgent business. Resolved not to part with his MS. Morrice thrust it beneath his girdle, and having crossed Westminster bridge, got into a wherry that went to London. The king was at this time in his barge, watching a bear-baiting in the water.

Morrice, not a little anxious to deliver up the precious MS. in safety, was unwilling to have his course interrupted ; but two yeomen of the guard, who were in the wherry with him, were so urgent in their desire to see the pastime, that poor Morrice was compelled to yield. As they drew near the multitude of boats that were crowded together, the bear broke loose, and made to the boat in which our friend Morrice was seated. The guards forsook the wherry, and sprang into another; but Morrice, watchful of his treasure, and fearing, lest in his attempt to escape, the MS. might fall into the water, sat still. The dogs and the bear, however, soon overbalanced the boat. It filled with water, and in the confusion, the book slid from his girdle into the Thames. A rank Papist took it up, who, finding it to contain a refutation of the Six Articles, refused to return it to the secretary; and telling him, only that both he and his master would be hanged for it; set out for the Hall, to deliver it to Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, Cranmer's greatest enemy."'

'Poor, poor, Morrice,' said Marion, whose

interest was exceedingly excited by the story, 'and did he lose his life?'

'No, Marion; both he and the MS. were preserved. In his distress, he went and told his grief to Cromwell, Vice-gerent for the spiritual affairs of the church; who immediately set out for Westminster-Hall; where, finding the possessor of the MS. he, by his authority, rescued it; and himself took it to the King's Presence Chamber, where he delivered it to Cranmer.'

'How happy and how grateful Morrice must have been,' again observed the little girl.

'Fox adds,' returned her brother, 'he felt too happy, in having only the trouble to transcribe the contents again, the water having a good deal obliterated them; but you will be sorry to hear, that Cromwell, who dealt thus kindly towards Morrice, was the first victim to these Six Articles. He was executed on Tower Hill, July, A. D. 1541.'

CHAPTER XIX.

'Dr. BARNES is the next martyr we read of. He was condemned for having declared boldly in St. Paul's church, "that the subtlety of the Devil in quoting Scripture, was applicable to that day of Papal error." At the stake he prayed God heartily to forgive those who had been the occasion of his death, as Christ forgave his murderers. Two brethren, Jerome and Garrett, suffered with him. The former of them, when brought to the stake, said, "Brethren, Jesus hath bought us all with no small price, neither with gold, or silver, or other such things of small value, but with his own most precious blood. Be not unthankful therefore to him, but as his disciples, love your brethren; love hurteth no man; love fulfilleth all things; bear your cross with

Christ; consider how patiently he suffered all things; that all that Christ did, was of mere goodness, not of our deserving; put no trust nor confidence in aught, save the blood of Christ, to whom I commit my soul; beseeching you all to pray for *me*, and my brethren here present with me; that our souls, leaving these wretched carcases, may constantly depart, in the true faith of Jesus Christ." The three martyrs then took each other's hands, kissed each other, and quietly and humbly offered themselves to the fire.

And now, Marion, comes an instance of female martyrdom,' said Stewart, 'and a most remarkable one it is. Anne Askew was a lady of quality, and a friend of the Queen.'

'But could not the Queen prevent the death of her own friend?'

'No, she was surrounded by powerful ministers, who had great influence over her husband, and who found it very easy to work upon him, to effect their wicked purposes. Among them, Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and Bonner, Bishop of London, were the principal. It is even said, that Gardiner,

knowing that Katherine Parr, the then Queen, was favourable to the reformation, tried to promote her ruin; and that it was with this end in view, that he selected Anne Askew, who was greatly in the Queen's favour, as his victim; charging her with heresy, on account of her denying the corporal presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. This devoted woman had endured much domestic trial for the gospel's sake. She had been turned out of doors by her husband, because, by a diligent perusal of the Scriptures, she had become a Protestant. One of the accusations laid against her by a Papist, was, "that she was the devoutest woman he had ever known, for she began to pray always at midnight, and continued for some hours in that exercise. In one of the many examinations which she went through, she was asked, if she had said that priests "could not make the body of Christ;" "I have read," she replied, "that God made man; but that man can make God, I never yet read, nor, I suppose, ever shall."'

'How I should have been afraid to answer them so,' said Marion.

'Upon a subsequent examination she was still bolder, and in answer to the same question, told the Papists, that what they called their god, was a piece of bread. "In proof thereof," said she, "make it when you list, let it but lie in the box three months, and it will be mouldy, and so turn to nothing that is good; wherefore I am persuaded that it cannot be God." They then condemned her to the flames. She was first laid on the rack, in order that they might extort from her some confessions, which would betray the names of persons holding the same sentiments with herself; particularly, they hoped that she would implicate the Queen; and when the Lieutenant of the Tower refused to let his gaoler stretch her on the rack a second time,—the Chancellor, and Bishops Bonner and Gardiner did it with their own hands. She bore it all without uttering a cry or a groan, though immediately upon being loosed she fainted.'

'The account is so very horrible,' said Mary, 'that I almost wish you would hasten to the close of her sufferings.'

'Yet, dear Mary, I am not detailing them

with half the painful minuteness used by Fox. It is almost incredible what this devoted woman endured. She was brought in a chair to the stake, her previous sufferings having quite taken from her the power to stand; and she was supported against the stake by the chain which fastened her; but her faith and invincible fortitude forsook her *not*; lifting her hands and eyes toward heaven, she prayed, "Lord, I have more enemies now than the hairs of my head, yet, Lord, shall they not overcome me. Thou wilt fight for me, for on Thee I cast my care. With all the malice they can devise, they fall upon me, thy poor needy creature; yet sweet Jesus, in Thee is my whole delight, and I heartily desire Thee, forgive them that violence, which they do, and have done unto me." In this extremity, one effort more was made to overcome her. The king's pardon was offered to her if she would recant; but refusing even to look upon it, she replied, that she came not there to deny her God. The reeds were then set on fire, and her last breath was spent in the following prayer for her enemies—"Open thou their

blind eyes, that they may do those things which are only acceptable before thee; even to set forth thy glory and beauty aright. So be it, Lord Jesus! Amen! So be it!"

'These exhibitions of the power of the Spirit of Christ, do indeed proclaim his name to be "Wonderful,"' observed Mrs. Graham. 'But who follows next in your list, Stewart?'

'A Scotch woman, mamma.'

'What! did they persecute the Christians in Scotland as well as in England?' asked Marion.

'Indeed they did,' replied her brother, 'Beaton, Bishop and Cardinal of St. Andrew's, was as great an enemy to the Reformation, as Gardiner and Bonner.'

'And in Ireland too did they persecute them?'

'You shall hear about Ireland by and by. First, let me tell you of Hellen Stirke, who suffered nobly in the cause. She was apprehended and condemned with many others, among whom was her husband. She earnestly desired that she might die with him; but because she desired it, she was not suffered

to do so. Following him, however, to the place of execution, she gave him comfort; exhorting him to patience and perseverance for Christ's sake, and parting from him with a kiss, she said, "Husband, rejoice; for we have lived together many joyful days; but this day, on which we must die, ought to be the most joyful to us both, for now we shall have joy for evermore; therefore I will not bid you good night, for we shall suddenly meet with joy in the kingdom of heaven." Hellen was then taken with her infant child, and drowned.

'The infant too?' asked Marion.

'Yes happily, poor babe; it was unconsciously the cause of its mother's death; her apprehension having resulted, simply from her having cried to God for help at the birth of this infant, and not to the Virgin Mary.'

'Is it possible?' observed Emily. 'I shall begin to grow incredulous soon, I am afraid, Stewart.'

'Would that there were cause for incredulity! but alas, Emily, it is not so.'

'What are you waiting for?' asked little Marion, after she had sat some minutes, watch-

ing her brother's thoughtful countenance, and wondering at his silence.

'I am trying to remember a verse in the Proverbs, exactly suited to the name of our next martyr,' was his reply; 'and I believe now that I have got it; and he repeated from the last verse of the third chapter of that book, "The wise in heart shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools."

'What then was the martyr's name,' asked the little girl?

'George Wiseheart,' replied her brother; and as I can prove to you beyond a doubt, that he was "wise in heart," and that he inherits glory; we will if you please consider him in connection with the text I have chosen.'

'He was educated in the University of Cambridge, a man, as singular for his learning, as for his sanctity. Several of the Scotch nobility had come over to England, with a treaty to Henry the Eighth; George Wiseheart returned to Scotland with them, and was there accused and apprehended by the command of Beaton. On the morning of his execution, two friars came from the cardinal,

one of whom dressed him in a black linen coat, and the other fastened about him several parcels of gunpowder. He was to suffer near the castle, which was the cardinal's palace. One of the windows was highly decorated for the accommodation of the cardinal, who was determined to glut his malice with the sight of Wiseheart's sufferings. At the stake, a rope was put round his neck, and an iron chain round his body. He then knelt down and prayed, "O thou Saviour of the world, have mercy on me. Father of heaven I commend my Spirit into Thy holy hands." Then turning to the people, "I beseech you Christian brethren and sisters," he said, "that ye be not offended at the word of God; and suffer patiently, and with a comfortable heart, for the word's sake; which is your undoubted salvation, and everlasting comfort. For that word's sake I suffer this day by men; not sorrowfully, but with a glad heart and mind. For this cause I was sent, that I should suffer this fire for Christ's sake. I fear it not; and so I pray you, if this persecution come unto you for the word's sake, not to fear them

which kill the body, and afterward have no power to kill the soul. Some have said of me, that I taught, that the soul of man should sleep until the last day; but I know surely, and my faith is such, that my soul shall sleep with my Saviour Christ this night, ere it be six hours, for whom I suffer this." While the flames were kindling, he looked up at the cardinal, and said, "He who now so proudly looks down upon me from yonder lofty place, shall soon be as ignominiously cast down." And truly it was only a few days after this, that Beaton was assassinated in his own castle. The hangman employed to execute the sentence of death against the martyr, struck with conviction, fell on his knees and said, "Sir, I pray you forgive me, for I am not guilty of your death." "Come hither to me," replied the other; he then kissed his cheek, saying, "Lo! here is a token that I forgive thee, do thine office." While burning, he said, "This flame has scorched my body, but hath not daunted my spirit;" and thus victoriously George Wiseheart slept in Jesus.'

'"Is your fire making ready?" asked Adam

Wallace, a holy martyr, whose spirit seemed to long for presence with Jesus. He was told it was, " Then I am ready," said the old man, " soon or late as it shall please my God." He then turned to a faithful brother, and said, " Commend me to the faithful, I am sure to meet them together in heaven." Coming to the castle hill, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, " Let it not offend you, that I suffer death this day for the truth's sake, " The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord." The provost eagerly commanded him to be silent. Then he looked again to heaven, and said, " Lord, they will not let me speak." The cord being about his neck, the fire was lighted, and so departed this faithful man, bearing testimony to the glory and power of God, in life and in death.'

'There is something beautifully simple about his story,' observed Mrs. Graham, 'so truly characteristic of that honest plainness which prevails among the Scotch, that I greatly admire it. Have you any more words of Scotland's martyrs to give us, Stewart?'

'Only those of one, mamma, but they are

remarkable for constancy and devotedness. Indeed the holy boldness of Walter Mille was such, that Fox says, "Out of his ashes, sprang thousands of his opinion and religion in Scotland." At the stake, having prayed long and silently, he stood upon the coals, and thus addressed the people,—"Dear friends, the cause why I suffer this day, is not for any crime laid to my charge, (albeit I be a miserable sinner before God,) but only for the defence of the faith of Jesus Christ set forth in his blessed word unto us; for which, as the faithful martyrs have offered themselves gladly before, being assured, after the death of their bodies, of eternal felicity; so this day I praise God, that he hath called me of his mercy among the rest of his servants, to seal up his truth with my life; which, as I have received it of him, so willingly I offer it to his glory." His last words were uttered in the fire; "Lord have mercy on me; pray, people, while there is time." He was the last martyr who suffered in Scotland during Henry the Eighth's reign. Indeed the death of this king followed almost immediately upon the martyr-

dom of Walter Mille ; after which event, a very new scene of things took place in England.'

'And a very happy one too,' exclaimed little Marion, 'for that good young King, Edward the Sixth, came to the throne, and I can tell you a great deal about him, for dear Grandpapa Graham so often talks to me of him.'

'To-morrow evening we shall rejoice to hear you, dear child, but to-night,' and he pointed to the time-piece—

'To-night it is too late,' said the little girl, as she cheerfully prepared to accompany her mother to the nursery.

CHAPTER XX.

'AND now,' said Stewart, when they met, 'will Marion tell us all that Grandpapa Graham has told her about King Edward the Sixth?'

'One day, Stewart, when he saw me throw my Bible down carelessly, he reminded me of King Edward's refusing to stand upon a Bible, which a person once directed him to make use of, that he may lay hold of something beyond his reach. He compared him too, to young King Josiah, who was just eight years old when he began to reign over Judah, while Edward was nine,—*nine* when he began to reign, and sixteen when he left off. O! it is so sad to think how soon he died: and then, that his wicked sister Mary should take his place; but I am running on too fast. Stewart, I quite understand that look.'

'And feel disposed to obey it, I hope, Marion; for I want to tell you King Edward's history in some better order than you would be likely to adopt. From an infant, Edward was remarkable for the gentleness and suavity of his disposition, which he seemed to have inherited from his mother Jane Seymour, combined with which, he had all his father's capacity and dexterity in business, and love of learning. He was a child trained up in the way he should go, under the able superintendence of Dr. Cox and Sir John Cheke; they directed his education to the best and highest objects, and the progress of their pupil corresponded with their utmost desires. At his coronation, when the three swords, for the three kingdoms, were brought to be carried before him, he observed, that there was one yet wanting, and called for the Bible: "That, (said he) is the sword of the Spirit, and ought in all right to govern *us*, who use these for the people's safety, by God's appointment. Without that sword we are nothing—we can do nothing." One, who was about his person, says of him, "If ye knew the towardness of

that young prince, your hearts would melt to hear him named:—the beautifullest creature that liveth under the sun; the wittiest, the most amiable,—and the gentlest thing of all the world." Surely God's grace was greatly magnified in this young prince. "No pen," says Fuller, "passeth by him without praising him, though none praising him to his full deserts." Laws were soon enacted, for further correction of the abuses of the Romish church; and on one occasion, when his sister Mary sent to ask leave to have mass in her own house, without being subject to the law; and when Cranmer and Ridley, with others, fearing the consequences of a refusal, urged him to comply, Edward boldly answered, while tears were in his eyes; "I would rather part with life, and all that I have, than agree to that which I know certainly to be against the truth of God." "He has more divinity in his little finger, than all we in our whole bodies," was the observation of Cranmer and Ridley after this interview; and truly the matured principle, which in this, and many other instances, was manifested in the conduct

of one so young, is rare and striking. Before I leave his history, however, Marion, let me not forget to tell you, that one of the means Edward used to acquire religious knowledge, was the taking notes of every sermon he heard. Will Marion remember this?'

CHAPTER XXI.

'OH! it will be a melancholy evening, Stewart,' said Marion, when they met. 'That bloody queen ought not to have been called Mary, for all the Maries I know, are loving and gentle;' and she sprang on her aunt's knee, and hid her face in her neck as she said so.

'However melancholy,' replied her brother, 'we must not shrink from our task; and let us remember, how much pure gold came out of that seven-times heated furnace. The Lord saw that his church needed further purifying, and therefore he tried her. The queen was but an instrument, used to fulfil the wise and good purposes of God. She was crowned on the 1st of October, 1553, and on the tenth of that month, solemn mass was celebrated after the popish manner, in the palace of West-

minster. All the statutes which Edward had made, were repealed; every thing was changed and thrown back. Proclamation was issued, prohibiting the sincere preaching of God's word. The heads of the reformed clergy, being brought forth to hold disputations with the Roman Catholics, in which they could never agree, were committed to prison; and then the fiery persecution began. John Rogers was the great proto-martyr in the reign of Mary. He was a prebendary of St. Paul's, and was condemned for maintaining that the Church of Rome was the Church of Antichrist. The sentence being passed, he requested that his poor wife, being a foreigner, might come and speak with him as long as he lived: "for she hath eleven children," said he, "that are hers and mine, and I would counsel her what were best for her to do." But Gardiner (who was now raised to the office of Chancellor), with his usual brutality, refused to comply; and when, on the very day of his execution, John Rogers asked Bonner, that he might speak to her a few words only, before his burning; that wretch also, would

not permit it. She met him, however, with her eleven children, one hanging on her breast, as he went to Smithfield. That sight did not abate the cheerfulness of his courage. A pardon was offered him if he would recant. "That which I have preached," he said, "I will seal with my blood." He sung the Psalms of David, and particularly the Miserere, as he was being fastened to the stake; and when in the fire, washed his hands in the flames as they blazed about him. Nothing moved his calm resolute spirit. Many who were present, blessed God for the support vouchsafed to him, and derived strength from his example.'

'How very beautiful,' observed Mrs. Graham. 'Satan seems to have left no means untried, wherewith to try this man's constancy, and seduce him from the faith; yet did "none of those things move him, neither counted he his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Acts xx. 24.

'And who, Stewart, was the second martyr. Was it not Lawrence Saunders?' asked Emily.

'Yes, it was; in Edward's reign he had been preferred to a church in London, and very soon after the persecution began, was selected as a victim, and brought before Bonner. The Bishop desired him to state in writing, his opinion concerning the first of the Six Articles: he obeyed without hesitation, saying, as he delivered the paper, "My Lord, ye do seek my blood, and ye shall have it. I pray God, that ye may be so baptized in it, that ye may thereafter loath blood-sucking, and become a better man." Being thus assured of speedy death, he wrote to his wife, saying, "he was shortly to be dispatched to Christ, and desiring her to make and send him a garment, which," said he, "you know whereunto it is consecrated. O my heavenly Father, look upon me in the face of thy Christ, or else I shall not be able to abide thy countenance. He will do so, and therefore I will not be afraid what sin, death, and hell can do against me. O Wife, always remember the Lord, God bless you! Yea, he will bless

thee, good wife, and thy poor boy also. Only cleave thou unto him, and he will give thee all things." On his way to the place of execution, a poor shoemaker who had been used to serve him with shoes, came to him, and said, "O my good master, God strengthen and comfort you." "Pray for me," answered Saunders, "for I am the unmeetest man for this high office, that ever was appointed to it; but my gracious God and dear father, is able to make me strong enough." When come to the stake, he knelt on the ground and prayed; he then arose, embraced the stake, and kissed it, saying, "Welcome the cross of Christ; welcome everlasting life;" and being fastened to the wood, the fire was lighted, and he fell sweetly asleep in Jesus.'

'How could the enemies of Christianity imagine, that the display of such faith, under such trying circumstances, was likely to limit the extension, or weaken the power of that cause which excited men to such heroic conduct?' observed Emily.

'Because,' replied Stewart, 'they were

under the delusion of Satan. The impression under which they acted, undoubtedly was, that by such horrible examples, they should strike terror throughout the kingdom. With this view, they next selected that holy man John Hooper, whom they ordered to Gloucester, there to suffer, on the day after Saunders had borne his testimony in the flames. During Henry the Eighth's reign, the persecution that arose on account of the six Articles, drove Hooper from the university of Oxford, where he was then a student. He went into France and Germany, and remained there until the accession of Edward. He however seems, even then, to have looked on to Martyrdom, as the probable termination of his course; for when, on leaving his asylum at Zurich, Bullinger, a dear friend, requested that he would correspond with him; Hooper replied that he would, but, taking him earnestly by the hand, added, "The last news of all I shall not be able to write." On his return to England, he preached in London, with power and much acceptance. His church was always crowded. Fox says of him, "in

doctrine he was earnest, in tongue eloquent, in the Scriptures perfect, in pains indefatigable." King Edward made him bishop both of Worcester and Gloucester. He could not be persuaded, however, to wear the Ecclesiastical vestment which the bishops wore, and he therefore wrote to the King, desiring that he might be discharged from the bishopric, or be given a dispensation from this article of conformity; which petition, the king immediately granted. "Promotion," continues Fox, "never changed him, neither did dainty fare corrupt him. His life was such a walk of holiness, that none could fasten any fault upon him. He was sound in his judgment, spare of diet, sparer of words, and sparest of time. He ruled and guided the affairs of his dioceses, as though he had no charge, but one family. No father in his household, no gardener in his garden, no husbandman in his vineyard, was more employed than he in his diocese, among his flock, going about the towns and villages, teaching and preaching to the people there."'

'What a man to be put to death,' said Emily.

'Just the man,' returned her sister, 'of

whom the world was not worthy; but pray go on, Stewart.'

'On being arrested and brought to London, Gardiner first asked him if he was married? You remember, Marion, that one of the Six Articles forbad the marriage of priests?'

'Yes, I do.'

'Hooper replied, "Yea, my Lord, and will not be unmarried, till death unmarry me."'

'There is a peculiar strength and energy, in all that comes from the lips of Hooper,' observed Mrs. Graham.

'That was quite his characteristic indeed, mamma,' replied Stewart; 'and there is a passage in the last prayer he uttered before his execution, so remarkably illustrative of this, that I must repeat it to you.'

'But why not give us the whole?'

'It is of considerable length, and our evening is drawing to a close. The extract I referred to is this: '*Lord, I am Hell, but thou art Heaven; have mercy therefore, after thy great mercy. Thou art ascended into Heaven, receive me, Hell, to be partaker of thy*

joys, where thou sittest in equal glory with thy Father."'

'There is indeed an uncommon depth in those first few words, "*Lord, I am Hell, but thou art Heaven,*"' said Mrs. Graham, 'and they remind me of our friend Mr. T. who, preaching from that verse in the forty-second Psalm, "Deep calleth unto deep," &c. said, "It is the depth of misery, crying unto the depth of mercy."'

'Into the deep waters of death Hooper was now to be brought. He was taken in custody to Gloucester, there to suffer; at which he greatly rejoiced; praising God, that he saw it good to send him amongst the people over whom he was pastor, there to confirm with his death, the truth which he had before taught them; not doubting, that the Lord would give him strength to perform this last office to his glory. The stake had been made ready near a great elm tree, in front of the cathedral, where he was wont to preach. When arrived at the stake, three iron chains made to bind him, were brought. "Ye need not thus trouble yourselves," he said, "for I doubt

not, but God will give me strength sufficient to abide the extremity of the fire, without bands, notwithstanding, suspecting the frailty of the flesh, but having assured confidence in God's strength, I am content ye do as ye think good." Being ready, he looked upon the people, among whom, nothing was to be seen but weeping and sorrow. Then lifting up his hands and eyes toward heaven, he prayed. While thus engaged, a box containing his pardon, was brought and laid before him; at the sight of which, he twice exclaimed, "If you love my soul, away with it!" The man appointed to make the fire came and asked his forgiveness. "Why should I forgive you, I know no offence you have committed." "O, sir," said the man, "I am appointed to make the fire." "Therein thou dost nothing offend me," answered Hooper. "God forgive thee thy sins, and do thine office, I pray thee." Then the reeds were placed around him; he received two bundles of them in his own hand, embraced and kissed them—put one under each arm, and showed how the rest should be bestowed, pointing to the place where any did lack.'

'I never have heard any thing like this, Stewart,' said his little sister, 'it is more than any of the other martyrs did, to arrange the reeds, just as though he were going to make a fire to warm himself at.'

'The valley of the shadow of death had no terrors for him,' replied Stewart, 'he feared no evil, for the Lord was with him—His rod and His staff comforted him. The fire was now lighted, the wind was very high, and blew the flame from him; so that he suffered a more lingering death, than any one of those, who were martyred during the Marian persecution; but he endured patiently. During the whole time he prayed: "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me; Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." His lips moved as in prayer, long after his voice ceased; he smote upon his breast, until the fire consumed his strength, then bowing forwards, he yielded up his spirit.'

'I can only repeat—wonderful—most wonderful!' observed Mrs. Graham, '"Lord, what is man, that thou hast such respect unto him."'

CHAPTER XXII.

'THE day of Hooper's martyrdom,' said Stewart, when they assembled on the following evening, 'was commemorated in like manner at Hadley in Suffolk, by the martyrdom of Dr. Rowland Taylor. Hadley was one of the first towns, that received the word of God in England, through the preaching of Thomas Bilney. That holy man laboured so faithfully and zealously in the gospel, at Hadley; that there was scarcely ever known a place so remarkable for godliness. Fox observes, "It might almost have been termed a University of the learned in Christ's school, than a town of cloth making." Here lived Dr. Rowland Taylor, whose life was an example of unfeigned holiness, a lively image of all those qualities, described by St. Peter,

in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, as characteristic of a faithful overseer of the flock of Christ. He was as the salt of the earth; a light in God's house set upon a candlestick, for all good men to imitate and follow. The people of Hadley loved him as their own lives. On one Lord's day, some zealous Romanists came with a priest, and a few armed followers, and took possession of his church. Taylor ordered them to depart; upon which they turned him out of the church, closed the doors to exclude the people, performed mass, and then lodged a complaint against him before Gardiner. On this, the people importuned him to escape, reminding him of Christ's injunction to his disciples: "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another." "Dear friends," said Dr. Taylor, "I thank your care; and though I know, that there is neither justice nor truth to be looked for at my adversaries' hands, yet I know my cause to be so good and righteous, and the truth so strong upon my side, that I will, by the grace of God go and appear, and resist their evil doing. I shall never be able

to do God so good service as now, nor shall I ever have so glorious a calling as I now have, nor so great mercy proffered me as at this present. Wherefore I beseech you, and all my other friends, to pray for me; and I doubt not, but God will give me strength, and his Holy Spirit, that all mine enemies shall have shame of their doings." Accordingly, he set out for London, accompanied by a faithful servant, John Hull, who, on the way entreated him to fly, "O John," he said, "remember the good shepherd, Christ, which not alone fed his flock, but died for it. Him must I follow, and with God's grace, will do. Therefore, good John, pray for me, and discourage me not in this my goodly enterprize."'

'Poor John,' said little Marion, 'how painful it must have been to him.'

'Yes, he loved his master very much; but his master loved Jesus better,' replied Stewart, 'and a full and bold confession he made for him before all his enemies;—when charged with having opposed the priest who said mass in his church, he replied, "My lord, I am parson of Hadley, and it is against all right,

conscience, and laws, that any man should come into my charge, and presume to infect the flock committed unto me, with venom of the Popish idolatrous Mass." He was then ordered to be conveyed back to Hadley, and there burnt. The night after his degradation, his wife, with one of his sons, and the faithful John Hull, were permitted to sup with him. The following day, a little before noon, the sheriff of Essex arrived. Taylor was then placed on horseback, and brought out of London. When they came to Brentwood, a close hood was made for him, with holes for the eyes and mouth, that he might not be recognised. In this way they arrived at Hadley. A poor man was waiting for him at the bridge-foot, with five small children; they fell upon their knees, holding up their hands, and the man cried, "O dear Father, and good Shepherd, doctor Taylor; God help and succour thee, as thou hast often succoured me and my poor children!" The streets were lined with people, some of whom cried out, "There goeth our good Shepherd, that so faithfully hath taught us, so fatherly hath cared for us,

so godly hast governed us. O merciful God, what shall we poor scattered lambs do? Good Lord strengthen him, and comfort him." "I have preached to you God's word and truth," said the martyr, "and I am come this day to seal it with my blood." Being arrived at Aldham Common, where a great multitude were assembled, he asked what it meant, and being told that *there* he was to suffer, he exclaimed, "God be thanked, I am to die even at home, in Hadley!" and, alighting from his horse, he tore with both his hands the hood from his head. The people burst into loud weeping, when they saw his reverend and ancient face, and grey hairs, "Christ strengthen thee, and help thee!" they said. He attempted to speak to them, but one of the guards thrust a staff into his mouth. He was treated with inhuman barbarity. Even when chained to the stake, a wretch threw a faggot at him, which cut his face so that the blood ran down. "O friend," said the martyr, "I have harm enough! what needed that?" Having prayed silently, Taylor rose, then kissed the stake, got into the pitch-barrel in which he was to

stand, and with his back upright against the stake, his hands folded together, his eyes towards heaven, he said, "Merciful Father of heaven, for Jesus Christ my Saviour's sake, receive my soul into thy hands." And when the fire had been kindled, and he stood patient and unmoved, with his hands folded in prayer, a fellow, whose character made the action appear an impulse of brutality, rather than compassion, cleft his skull with a halberd, and the body then fell forward. Thus, rendered this man of God his blessed soul, into the hands of his merciful Father, and to his most dear and certain Saviour Jesus Christ; whom he most entirely loved, faithfully and earnestly preached, obediently followed in living, and constantly glorified in dying.'

'Blessed, blessed saint,' said Mary.

'Southey observes in reference to Taylor's martyrdom, "The effect of such executions, was such as the sufferers trusted it would be, not what the persecutors intended and expected. It seemed as if the martyrs bequeathed to their friends and followers, like Elijah the prophet, a double portion of their spirit, from the flames,

amid which they ascended to their everlasting reward." He next introduces his readers to the martyrdom of John Bradford; but Fox gives a most interesting account of a poor fisherman who was burnt at Cardiff, in Wales. Both of these, however, we must leave until to-morrow evening,' said Stewart, 'since our hour is more than expired; and I have letters to write,—so good night little one,'—and, kissing Marion, he ran off to his study.

CHAPTER XXIII.

'AND now for the poor fisherman's story,' said little Marion, as the party rose from the tea-table, 'what was his name, Stewart?'

'Rawlins White,—he was simple and unlearned, and was brought up in all the superstition and idolatry of his country. Through hearing the gospel preached during the time of Edward's reign, he began to be a diligent searcher into truth. Not knowing letters, he was at a loss how to satisfy his desires. And how, Marion, do you think he set about the attainment of them?'

'By learning his letters, and so becoming able to read, I suppose.'

'No, it was by means of a child, younger I dare say than you are, that Rawlins White gained all his knowledge. He had a little

boy, and it came into his mind to send this child to school, to learn to read English, which, as soon as he could do, he read to his father every night out of the Scriptures.'

'I wonder how long the little boy was in learning to read, Stewart.'

'I dare say not long, for Fox says of him, that he was a "minister, specially provided of God for his father;" and therefore I conceive him to have been a good attentive boy. It is said, however, that through the help of his little son, the honest fisherman became deeply and wonderfully taught in the word of God. He had a singular gift of memory, and could cite Scripture, with a readiness, beyond men of riper and more profound knowledge. It was his custom to pray with his neighbours and townsmen, and also to instruct them, so that through his means, numbers were converted. After the accession of Mary, tidings of such a man as Rawlins White, soon reached the bishop of Llandaff; who had him seized and committed to prison; and soon after sent him to London, where he was tried, and sentenced to be burnt.'

'Oh! his poor little boy,' cried Marion, 'what became of him?'

'We are only told,' replied Stewart, 'that on the morning of his father's execution, as he was being led to the stake, he met his poor wife and children; (his little boy, I suppose, among the rest,) all weeping and lamenting bitterly. The sight was unexpected, and so pierced his heart, that tears trickled down his face. But soon after, as though grieved at this proof of the infirmity of his flesh, he struck his breast with his hand, saying, "Ah, flesh, hinderest thou me so? wouldest thou fain prevail? Well, I tell thee, do what thou canst, thou shalt not, by God's grace, have the victory." Cheerfully and joyfully he set his back close to the stake, and when he had stood there a while, he said to a brother near him, "I feel a great fighting between the flesh and the spirit, and the flesh would fain prevail; and therefore, I pray you, when you see me in any way tempted, hold your finger up to me, and I trust I shall remember myself."'

'Sweet, humble spirit,' said Mary, 'he

knew what fear and trembling were in their true sense—diffident of self, while strongly confident in God.'

'This was remarkably the case,' replied Stewart, 'for when the chain was brought that was to bind him, he gave God thanks; and as the smith made it fast, he said, "I pray you, my good friend, knock in the chain fast, for it may be, the flesh will strive mightily; but God of his great mercy, give me strength and patience, to abide the severest struggle." During his burning, the constant cry he uttered was, "Lord, receive my soul. O Lord, receive my Spirit." Thus slept Rawlins White, and thus suffered the martyr, for the testimony of God's truth. He was sixty years old, his hair perfectly white, and his whole appearance at the stake seemed almost angelic.'

'O the cruelty of those wretched men!' exclaimed Emily, 'and moreover, to make God, a God of love, the author of such diabolical zeal. How awful a consideration it is.'

'Truly awful indeed,' was the assent of all around; 'and now Stewart you are to give us the history of the holy Bradford, are you not?'

'Yes, mamma, John Bradford very soon followed Taylor. They were fellow-prisoners together in the King's Bench, and Bradford, writing to Archbishop Cranmer, who, with the bishops Ridley and Latimer, were prisoners at Oxford, says—"Our dear brother Rogers hath broken the ice valiantly; and this day, or to-morrow, hearty Hooper, sincere Saunders, and trusty Taylor, end their course and receive their crown. The next am I, which hourly look for the porter, to open to me the gates after them, that I may enter into the desired rest. God forgive mine unthankfulness for his exceeding great mercy, that amongst so many thousands, it pleaseth his mercy to choose me to be one, in whom he will suffer. Oh, what am I, Lord! that thou shouldest thus magnify me, so vile a man! Dear fathers, be thankful for me, that I still may be found worthy: and for your parts, make you ready; the marriage of the Lamb is prepared, come unto the marriage!" One of Latimer's searching sermons had been made the means of Bradford's conversion. He then gave up fair prospects of worldly advancement, that he

might become a preacher of the gospel; and was ordained by Ridley to that office. Being apprehended and cast into prison, all his time was spent in reading and prayer. At length, when the keeper's wife, with tears, told him that they were preparing his chain, and on the morrow he must be burnt; he put off his cap, and lifting up his eyes, thanked God. "I have looked for this a long time," said he, "and therefore it cometh not now to me suddenly, but as a thing waited for, every day and hour: the Lord make me worthy thereof." He retired into his chamber, and prayed awhile in secret; and when night came, dressed himself in the garment, which a faithful friend had made for his burning. They removed him from the Counter to Newgate about midnight, thinking no one would be abroad; but even then, multitudes waited for him in the way, to give and to receive the last farewell, and the last blessing. Arrived at Smithfield, he went to the stake, then holding up his hands, and casting his countenance towards heaven, he said, "O England, England, repent thee of thy sins—beware of idolatry—beware of false

antichrists—take heed they deceive you not." Then embracing the reeds, he endured the flame as a fresh gale of wind in a hot summer's day; and his last audible words were, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to eternal life, and few there be that find it." Words uttered with the feeling of one, who had trod in that way, who now entered into that gate, and who *with*, and *in* Him, who is both the *door* and the *way*, the martyr liveth for evermore.'

'Happy Bradford,' said Mrs. Graham; 'if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him.' What a word of comfort and strength must that have been to such men, under such circumstances.

CHAPTER XXIV.

'I WEEN I am the weakest, many ways, of our company,' was an expression, in one of Ridley's last letters to Bradford.

'Was not Dr. Ridley born in the county where uncle Henry lives?' asked Marion.

'Yes, he was descended,' says Fox, 'from a right worshipful stock in Northumberland: and had been successively, Master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge,—Bishop of Rochester, and of London,—and may we not add,' observed Mary, 'as the highest point of promotion, to which he attained on earth, was, thought worthy to be numbered amongst the blessed company of martyrs.'

'How does that last exaltation dim the lustre of the rest,' returned Mrs. Graham; 'it is just the temporal, swallowed up in the eternal; things seen, in things not seen. O

to lose ourselves in Jesus; to be disciples indeed; not above our master, but above all that opposed and crucified the Lord of Glory.'

'Such, mamma, was Ridley. He was a man of the kindest and gentlest disposition, yet never did he yield in any point that would have compromised the glory of his God; and his prayer for others was, "that no brother or sister, who should be brought into the wrestling place, might shrink or relent one inch; nor give back, whatsoever might befal, but stand by, even unto death." Commissioners were sent from London to Oxford, to condemn both him and Latimer. The latter, was at this time nearly seventy years of age; he had been very inhumanly treated in his prison; and when he appeared before his judges, his appearance was such, as might have moved compassion, even in those, who knew not his singular integrity and worth. He came with his hat in his hand, with a kerchief bound round his head, and over it a night cap or two, and a great cap, such as townsmen used in those days, with two broad flaps to button under the chin. His dress was a gown of Bristol frize, old and

threadbare, fastened round the body with a penny leathern girdle; his Testament was suspended from this girdle by a leathern string, and his spectacles, without a case, were hanging from his neck upon his breast.'

'Dear venerable man,' said Mary, 'beneath that worn-out exterior, stood a son of the King of Kings, an heir of God, just entering on the possession of his inheritance.'

'In early life,' continued Stewart, 'Latimer had been like Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of the church of Christ. Like Paul, he became a doer and a preacher of righteousness. From his great age and infirmity, he wrote less in his prison, than either Cranmer or Ridley; but in prayer, he was fervently occupied, and often continued so long kneeling, that he was not able to rise without help. One chief object of his prayers was, that God would restore the gospel to England once again; and these words "once again," says Fox, "he did so press home upon the ear of God, as though he had seen God before him, and spoken to him face to face." The sentence of burning, followed immediately on the examination of

these two holy men. As Ridley sat at supper, the night before his execution, he bade his friends to his marriage, "for to-morrow," said he, "I must be married. Sister, can you find it in your heart to be there?" Seeing a friend weep, to hear him talk thus; "O, you love me not," he said, "in that you weep; indeed, you be not so much my friend, as I thought you had been; but quiet yourself, though my breakfast shall be somewhat sharp and painful, yet I am sure, my supper shall be more pleasant and sweet." On the following day, both himself and Latimer were led to the place of execution, which was in a ditch opposite to Baliol College. They embraced each other, and knelt, each beside his stake, in prayer. They then undressed themselves. Latimer put on a shroud, and as if with his prison dress, he had put off the burthen of infirmity and age, he looked, "not the withered old man, but as comely a father as one might lightly behold." He stood perfectly upright, and lifting his eyes towards heaven, with a look full of confidence, he said; "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to

bear." When the fire was brought, Latimer said, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man! we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England, as I trust shall never be put out!" The venerable old man received the flame as if embracing it; and having, as it were, bathed his hands in the fire, and stroked his face with them, died presently, as if without pain. Ridley endured a longer martyrdom, and as the fire flamed around him, repeated continually, "Lord, receive my spirit." As the bodies were consumed, the quantity of blood which gushed from Latimer's heart, was astonishing. It was observed the more, because he had often prayed during his imprisonment, that as God had appointed him a preacher of his word, so also he would give him grace to stand to his doctrine until death, and shed his *heart's blood* for the same. And thus ends the account of these two great reformers of our church. Philpot and Cranmer I believe, are the only remaining martyrs, whose last words are recorded, and as it is getting late, mamma, suppose we leave them until to-morrow.

CHAPTER XXV.

'ON the following evening, Stewart began to describe the temper and abilities of Philpot; who, at the commencement of this bloody reign, was one of the six clergy, who publicly opposed the restoration of Popery. He challenged the Romanists to dispute with him on the question of transubstantiation; and if he did not confound any six of them on that point, "let me," he said, "be burnt before the court-gates with as many faggots as be in London." Before his martyrdom, he from time to time, passed through thirteen examinations, before the Bishops and Heads of the Romish church; and truly in them all, he proved his cause to be on the side of truth. He was a true soldier of the cross, and fought the battles of his Lord manfully. When told that sentence was

passed for him to be burnt at Smithfield, he said, "I am ready; God grant me strength, and a joyful resurrection." He then went into his chamber, and poured out his spirit unto the Lord his God, giving him most hearty thanks, that he of his mercy, had made him worthy to suffer for his truth. On entering Smithfield, he knelt down, saying, "I will pay my vows in thee, O Smithfield." And when come to the stake, he embraced, and kissed it, saying, "Shall I disdain to suffer at this stake, seeing my Redeemer did not refuse to suffer a most vile death upon the cross for me?" He then meekly repeated some of the Psalms of David, and manifesting to the last, the same brave heart, collected mind, and firm faith which he had shown in all his trials, he yielded up his spirit into the hands of Him who gave it.'

'It must have been an immense trial to the surviving friends of the Protestant cause, to see one and another of its great supporters, laid low in such quick succession,' observed Mary.

'I was just thinking of the same thing,'

returned her aunt, 'and to the eye of sense, it must have been an overwhelming trial. Faith, however, looks beyond sense, and according to their faith, so doubtless they found strength equal to their day.'

'And now, resumed Stewart, 'the man by whom, more than by any other single hand, the Reformation in this country had been conducted; is to be brought before us, in the person of Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury.'

'And there is the picture of his martyrdom,' cried little Marion. 'Stewart, I remember the story of "that unworthy hand,"—' and a melancholy story indeed it is to remember,' returned Mary, 'the recantation of that devoted man was an act, that caused many an enemy of God to triumph.'

'Was it not one also, which tended very much to deepen the humility of Cranmer?' asked Mrs. Graham, 'and has it never struck you, how like the dealings of God with Hezekiah were, to his dealings with Cranmer. "He left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." 2 Chron. xxxii. 32.

'Fox says,' continued Stewart, 'that no

man ever came so near the Scripture standard of what a bishop should be, as Cranmer did.'

'It seems so very surprising,' again observed Mary, 'that after having written so learnedly, and laboured so constantly, and above all, suffered so much for the cause of Christ, that then he should at last depart from the truth.'

'It does indeed, appear so,' said her aunt, 'but the triumph of the enemy was short-lived; for Cranmer, like Thomas Bilney, knew no happiness, until he repented and confessed the foulness of the deed which he had committed.'

'I should like to hear all about his repentance, and return to the truth,' said Marion.

'You may easily suppose, Marion, that the queen, Mary, was very glad when she heard of Cranmer's recantation; she loved the Romish church, and thought his relapse would bring glory to her cause; but she hated Cranmer in her heart, and determined to get rid of him; and even, while openly flattering him, she was taking secret counsel for his death; and was directing Dr. Cole, one of her creatures, to prepare a sermon to preach on the occasion at

Oxford; even appointing the day on which it was to take place. Never was a vindictive temper gratified at the expence of justice, more entirely than in the present instance. Cranmer, it appears, was not informed of the determination concerning him, even on the morning when he was to suffer. He was summoned to appear in St. Mary's Church, Oxford, there to make his recantation before an assembled congregation. Thither he went, attended by the mayor, aldermen, and all the great dignitaries of the Romish church, and was placed on a stage, over against the pulpit. When he had ascended the stage, he knelt and prayed, weeping so profusely, that many, even of the Papists were moved to tears. At length, Cole began his sermon; in it he gave thanks for Cranmer's conversion, but at the same time, declared it to be the Queen's pleasure that he should suffer; promising, however, that dirges, masses, and funerals, should be executed for the succour of his soul, in all the churches of Oxford. During all this time, Cranmer's appearance betokened signs of bitterest agony. Fox writes thus of him,

"With what great grief of mind he stood hearing the sermon, the outward shews of his body and countenance did better express, than any man can declare: one while, lifting up his hands and eyes unto heaven, and then again for shame, letting them down to the earth. A man might have seen the very image and shape of perfect sorrow, expressed in him. More than twenty several times—the tears gushed out abundantly, dropping down from his fatherly face, so that every heart around was moved to pity." The sermon being ended, Cole said, "And now, brethren, lest any man doubt of this man's earnest conversion and repentance, you shall hear him declare before you, his undoubted and true profession of his faith." Now was Cranmer's extremity, and it proved indeed God's opportunity. He enabled his servant boldly and fearlessly, to confess the faith of Jesus Christ to the glory of his name, and the entire discomfiture of his enemies.'

'What did the Papists say?' asked Marion.

'They were at first too much astonished to interrupt him; at length, Cole said from the

pulpit, "Stop the heretic's mouth, and take him away." Cranmer was now pulled down from the stage, and carried to the stake. They brought him to the spot where Latimer and Ridley had suffered. There he knelt down and prayed, and then prepared for the fire. His feet were bare; his head was perfectly bald, but his beard was long and thick, and his countenance so venerable, that it moved even his enemies to compassion. When the wood was kindled, and the flame rose, he held out his hand to meet it, and retained it there stedfastly until it was consumed, repeating often with a loud and firm voice, "This unworthy hand. This unworthy right hand." Never did martyr endure the fire with more invincible resolution; no cry was heard, save the cry of the protomartyr Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and in the greatness of the flame he yielded up his spirit.'

A thoughtful silence followed this account of the faithful Cranmer, the last of those, whose dying sayings are recorded.

'And were there many put to death afterwards?' asked Marion.

'Not many,' replied her brother, 'for the Queen did not long survive Cranmer.'

'How glad the people must have been when she died.'

'There was not even the semblance of sorrow; she died in the morning; and in the afternoon, the bells of all the churches in London, were rung for the accession of Elizabeth.'

'Mary reigned I believe about five years, did she not?' asked Emily.

'Very nearly,' said Stewart; 'and during the time, it is calculated, that two hundred and eighty eight persons were burnt alive.'

'Is it possible,' said Mrs. Graham. 'Some men's sins are indeed "open beforehand, going before to judgment." The application is awful, but is it not suitable?'

CHAPTER XXVI.

'You promised, Stewart, to tell us about the Irish martyrs,' said Marion, when they met on the following evening.

'I think not,' replied her brother.

'Yes, when you came to the Scotch martyrs, you said we should hear about Ireland by and by.'

'And you shall hear about Ireland, Marion, but Irish martyrs there were none.'

'Were the people all Catholics then in that country?'

'No! but the protestants were preserved from martyrdom, and I will tell you how, in the words of Cox's history of Ireland. "Queen Mary, having dealt severely with the Protestants in England, about the latter end of her reign, signed a commission to take the same

course with them in Ireland; and, as one of the commissioners, she nominated Dr. Cole, who preached Cranmer's sermon. This doctor, coming with the commission to Chester, on his journey, the mayor of that city, who was a Roman Catholic, hearing that her majesty was sending a messenger into Ireland, waited on the doctor; who, in conversation with the mayor, took out of a cloak bag a leather box, saying as he did so, "Here is a commission that shall lash the heretics of Ireland." The good woman of the house being well affected to the protestant religion, and also, having a brother named John Edmonds, of the same mind, then living in Dublin, was much troubled at the doctor's words; but, watching her convenient hour, while the mayor took his leave, and the doctor complimented him down stairs, she opens the box, takes the commission out, and places in lieu of it, a sheet of paper, with a pack of cards wrapt up therein, the knave of clubs being faced uppermost. The doctor coming up to his chamber, suspecting nothing of what had been done, put up the box as formerly. The next day going to the water side,

wind and weather serving him, he sails towards Ireland, and landed on the 7th of October, 1558, at Dublin. Then, coming to the castle, the Lord Fitzwalters, being lord-deputy, sent for him to come before him and the privy council. After he had made a speech, relating upon what account he had come over; he presents the box unto the lord deputy, who, causing it to be opened, that the Secretary might read the commission, there was nothing, save a pack of cards, and the knave of clubs uppermost. The doctor, troubled in mind, returned to England; and coming to the court, obtained another commission; but, being detained by contrary winds, news came to him that the queen was dead; and thus God preserved the protestants of Ireland.'

'How they must have loved the Chester woman,' exclaimed Marion delightedly.

'Queen Elizabeth was so pleased with the story,' said Stewart, 'that she sent for the woman, whose name was Elizabeth Edmonds, and gave her a pension of forty pounds during her life.'

'What a very nice story it is, Stewart;

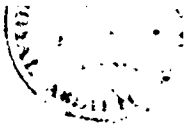
like it exceedingly; and I hope you will try and find some more to read to us, now that the "Last Words" are finished.

'Mary,' said Emily, 'I must propose a general vote of thanks to you, for having suggested a subject so interesting, as the one of "Last Words" has proved to us.'

'I rejoice with you, dear Emily, that the thought was ever suggested to me, and that on other grounds, than the present gratification derived from it. Many features in the appearance of the times, seem to indicate a crisis of danger and trial. Like Laodicea of old, the Christian church is luke-warm, her day of purifying must come; sooner or later it will come. We may live to see and share her trial. But, should the consideration of the faith, and constancy, and heavenly-mindedness of these Christian heroes, tend in any degree to the establishment of our principles, and to the increase of our love, and the advancement of our hope and trust; so that we may be able to stand firm in the evil day, and hold fast our profession against every adversary; then our time spent in gleaning the "Last Words" of

the martyrs, shall prove a rich blessing to our souls, a cause of special gratitude to our God yea, a subject to be remembered by us with joy, throughout the countless ages of eternity. "Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'" Heb. xii. 1, 2.

THE END.



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